

STRICTURES

ON

Religious Opinions,

AND THE BEST

HUMAN MEANS

OF ASCERTAINING THE

GENUINE DOCTRINES

OF

Christianity:

DESIGNED AS AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST

THE

THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

OF

DOCTOR PRIESTLEY

AND OTHER

HETERODOX TEACHERS.

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SUBJECT AREA

GENERAL BOSTON



PREFACE.

THE following Strictures are written with a design of shewing the necessity of some certain method of ascertaining the true sense of holy scripture, on points disputed between the several denominations of Christians; of enquiring whether any such method is discoverable; and, if discoverable, what that method is. It is well known very wide and important differences of opinion do prevail, even among pious and learned men. If, therefore, some common mode of interpretation could be recommended, in which the serious and candid of all parties might safely and honourably acquiesce, it would be rendering an essential service to the cause of religion, and bring us much nearer to one another than we now are, in points where we have long been accustomed to differ, to the no small injury of our common Christianity.

Should any misrepresentation of facts, opinions, or characters, be detected in the course of these Strictures, the Reader may be assured such misrepresentation is without the smallest intention. If I have appeared to bear hard upon some celebrated names, it is what they themselves have done with others, and, therefore, they can have no just right to complain. We have none of us, I would charitably hope, any other design but the vindication of what we conceive to be important truth. We all respect, no doubt, the persons of men, even while we oppose their real or imaginary mistakes; and can say with sincerity—*Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato; sed magis amicus Veritas.*¹

There is, I am well aware, a general prejudice gone abroad against controversial writings, and especially upon theological subjects; though for what justifiable reason I see not. Controversy in itself is only the discussion of some particular opinion or

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opinions,

¹Socrates is my friend, Plato is my friend; but Truth is more my friend.

opinions, by two or more persons, either in conversation or writing. One takes one side of the question, another the opposite, and each advances whatever he conceives makes most for the establishment of his own sentiments. If the opinions in debate are canvassed with moderation and good manners, I cannot conceive that any material injury should arise to the cause of truth. On the contrary, I apprehend that we have all received very important advantages from the opposition which the gospel has met with in the several ages of the world. Are we not indebted to false narratives of the life of Christ for the true narrative by St Luke? and to heretical teachers for St. John's gospel and first epistle, as well as for various of the writings we are favoured with by the great Apostle of the Gentiles? And, moreover, truth is of such a nature, that, the more it is tried, the brighter it shines; the more it is opposed, the faster it makes its way into the esteem of men. The genuine doctrines of the gospel have nothing to fear from investigation and opposition. They may be obscured and discredited for a time by great names; but we have the promise of eternal truth, that all the power and policy of hell shall not finally prevail against Christ and his church.

There are some topics, indeed, which are too deep and too sacred to be bandied about in the common style of polemical investigation, and one cannot, perhaps, take the inimical side of the controversy without incurring the charge of guilt and profaneness. Thus, it should seem, that no man can seriously, much less for diversion and entertainment, maintain a controversy against the Being of God, and continue innocent. So no man can attempt to subvert the truth of holy scripture, to invalidate its force upon the human mind, to oppose the divinity of Jesus Christ, the personal existence, divine nature, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, without provoking the displeasure of the Almighty. In like manner, the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ seems to be of that magnitude in the economy of man's redemption, that I do not see how any one can reject it,

in, with the bible in his hand, and yet obtain favour with heaven. I know this will be considered as uncharitable and illiberal. Terms unpopular, it is confessed! and great the pretensions of a certain class of men to a contrary conduct! But I cannot help it. True liberality of sentiment does not surely require, that we should sacrifice *the faith once delivered to the saints*, to gratify the humours of men. The truths of divine revelation are ever to be preferred to all human considerations. For he that is ashamed of Christ and of his words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father. And it appears to me, after much serious consideration upon the subject, there can be no salvation for any human being without the atonement; and whosoever rejects it, sins against the only remedy of God's providing, for restoring, in a way consistent with his own honour, the degenerate sons of Adam. Whether God could have contrived any other way of recovery, equally honourable for himself, and equally safe for man, becomes not us, perhaps, to say. But, that he hath not contrived any other, and that he will not accept of any other, is abundantly manifest from various parts of the sacred writings. If, therefore, any of our fellow Christians, induced by whatever motives, should be bold enough to attack any or all of these great, leading principles of divine revelation: if Hammon controvert the existence of God; Voltaire the truth of the bible; Swedenborg the doctrine of a resurrection; Lindsey the divinity of Christ, and personal existence of the Holy Spirit; Priestley the inspiration of scripture, the miraculous conception, the conclusiveness of St. Paul's reasoning, and the atonement made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world; I cannot help thinking they all incur a great degree of blame, and that, however sensible, wise, learned and moral they may be in other respects, in this they labour under a very serious mistake, if not under a very culpable and alarming insatiation of mind. And if any, or all of these gentlemen are hardy enough to take up their pens against these momentous truths of Christianity; it will

be the duty of every one that embraces them, to defend their credit in the best manner he is able. I do not say Christianity is at stake, or that the existence of these great verities of nature and revelation is at stake; for God will always defend his own honour, and no weapon that is formed against his gospel shall finally prosper. But, though it is evident from the whole history of God's dealings with mankind, that we need entertain no fears for the truths of divine revelation, we ought to have serious apprehensions for our own safety, if we desert the post of duty, and neglect to use our best endeavours to prevent the diffusion of destructive error, and to promote the interests of pure and undefiled religion in the world. In such a case it is not choice, but dire necessity, which constrains the faithful servants of Christ to step forward, in spite of the "pity and indignation" of his adversaries,² in vindication of his personal honour, and what he has done to redeem the fallen race. We should, however, at all times, but especially when we attempt to defend so sacred and important a cause as the authenticity of holy scripture, and the great doctrines of salvation which it contains, take good heed, that our spirit be Christian, as well as our arguments conclusive. If we maintain the former, and fail in the latter, it is a proof that our heart is better than our head; and though we suffer an overthrow by our adversary, we shall receive an euge from our Great Master. But if we should fail in the former, and yet succeed in the latter, we shall receive only the poor eclat from our fellow creatures, of being the more able disputants, while the court of heaven, that unerring tribunal of all real excellency, passes a sentence of reprobation upon our misguided endeavours to maintain its cause. Both the matter and manner of all our religious discussions ought, therefore, to be carefully attended to. And if we fail in either, it should be rather in our logic, than the spirit with which we conduct our polemical ratiocinations.

In

²See Bishop Horsley's Tracts, p. 72, 73—and Dr. Priestley's Hist. of Cor. vol. 2. p. 471.

In the ensuing Strictures, it is, however, confessed, I have spoken very freely both of men and things. The cause appears to me to demand it. It is *pro aris et focis*; and I have no idea of being either ashamed or afraid of declaring what appears to be the truth. If we cannot advance more and better arguments in favour of the great peculiarities of the gospel, than our adversaries can bring against them, we are contented to give up the point, and enlist under the standard of heterodoxy. This is putting the matter upon a fair issue. Truth can never suffer by an honest appeal to evidence. If what is called orthodoxy⁴ will not stand this test, it is not worth defending: it is more than time it were given up by conscientious men.

But then we ought ever to remember, that religious truth requires a sober and serious mind in the investigation of it; that without this, let our learning and ability be what they may, we are not in a capacity for arriving at the knowledge of it; and that none but those who *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God*; have any right to expect they shall be led into a saving acquaintance with CHRIST JESUS AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

Much may, indeed, be said, and much has been said, by the Atheist in favour of Atheism; by the Deist in favour of Deism; and by the Socinian in favour of Socinianism; yet, after all they have any of them written, and the most attentive application to their several arguments, I am still fully of opinion—1. That there is a God—2. That the bible is strictly true—3. That Christ is the Son of God—4. That he had a real existence prior to his being born of the Virgin—5. That he was begotten by the Holy Ghost—6. That he was with his Father the Creator of the universe—and, 7. That he made atonement for the sins of the world.—All these principles, with every just and natural inference flowing therefrom, I am most assuredly persuaded of; and stake the salvation of my soul upon the truth of them, with all imaginable confidence and cheerfulness of mind.

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I do

³For God and our country.

⁴See Pearson on the Creed, and Scott's Christian Life, for an able defence of what we usually mean by Orthodoxy.

I do not say that the following *Strictures* are in themselves sufficient vindication of the several propositions here enumerated. That is not the intention of them. I have only meant to show, that opinions extremely various and contradictory have prevailed, and do now prevail, in the world upon religious subjects; to make certain observations upon them, en passant; at the same time to recommend such books as treat upon these subjects more at large; and to point out the best human means of determining what are the genuine doctrines of Christianity. In the course of these observations, I have examined, pretty much at large, the erroneous assertions of Dr. Priestley, and other persons of similar sentiments, and have offered an antidote against, what I conceive to be, their fallacious arguments and dangerous opinions. The Reader will consider what has been said with seriousness and impartiality, and judge according to evidence.

MACCLESFIELD,

Nov. 20th. 1792.



STRICTURES,



STRICTURES, &c.

SECTION I.

TO a serious and well-disposed mind, there are few things so truly perplexing, as the various and contradictory opinions of men, upon religious subjects; especially where the object of worship, and the foundation of our future hopes are concerned. For, notwithstanding all the light derived from divine revelation, these latter ages have been as productive of literary and religious monsters, as the most extravagant of those that preceded them. It cannot be denied, nor indeed is it matter of much surprize, that the times prior to the gospel of Christ, abounded with opinions the most contradictory and absurd. A degree of extravagance equally distressing invaded the Christian church also, soon after the death of its Founder, and has come down to our own times with unabated vigour. It would be an amusing, and not unprofitable employment, to trace these eccentricities through the

the several periods of the church, and hold them up as a picture to the present age, to guard them against the licentiousness of religious opinions. But, if a subject like this were pursued in all its extent, through every century, the treatise would swell to an enormous size, and defeat its own intention. We will, therefore, confine our enquiry within a narrower compass, and select such circumstances only in the history of religion, as are calculated to illustrate and exemplify our present design.

The times since the reformation from Popery have been not less fruitful than those which preceded that event. For it is well known, by those who are
at

³The Roman Catholics frequently make the sects, parties, and absurd opinions which prevail among Protestants, an objection to the Reformation itself. This is not candid. We should do each other justice. There might be some shew of reason in the observation, if they themselves were perfectly unanimous in their religious sentiments. But it is well known this is far from being the case. More enthusiastic opinions and practices never prevailed among any body of people whatever. Ample instances might be produced. I shall only select, at present, the following examples of enthusiasm in conduct, practised by some of the most devout members of that communion:—"Some of the Mystics," says a living Author, "of the fifth century not only lived among the wild beasts, but also after their manner. They ran naked through the deserts with a furious aspect. They fed on grass and wild herbs, avoided the sight and conversation of men, remained motionless in certain places for several years, exposed to the rigour and inclemency of the seasons; and towards the conclusion of their lives, shut themselves up in narrow and miserable huts. All this was considered as true piety, the only method of rendering the Deity propitious to them, and by this means they attracted the highest veneration of the deluded multitude. One Simeon, a Syrian, in order perhaps to climb as near to heaven as he could, passed thirty-seven years of his wretched life upon five pillars, of six, twelve, twenty-two, thirty-six, and, lastly, forty cubits high. This practice continued in the East till the twelfth century.

at all acquainted with ecclesiastical affairs, that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were as productive of religious excesses as any other period since the birth of our Saviour. In the former of these ages appeared all the wild absurdities of the Anabaptists in Germany, with a short account of which I shall introduce these Strictures. These fanatics were headed by John Boccold and John Matthias, the former a tailor and the latter a baker; who having

“ The persons most distinguished in ecclesiastical history for their
“ bodily austerities and religious exercises, were Dominic, and Peter
“ Damiani, his spiritual guide. This Dominic for many years
“ had next to his skin an iron coat of mail, which he never put off
“ but for the sake of flagellation. He seldom passed a day without
“ chanting two psalters, at the same time whipping himself
“ with both his hands; and yet this was his time of greatest relaxation.
“ For in Lent, and while he was performing penance for
“ other persons, he would repeat at least three psalters a day, whipping
“ himself at the same time. He would often repeat two psalters
“ without any interval between them, without even sitting
“ down, or ceasing one moment from whipping himself.

“ Peter Damiani asking him one day if he could kneel with his
“ coat of mail; he said, When I am well I make an hundred genuflections
“ every fifteenth psalm, which is a thousand in the whole
“ psalter: and one time he told his master, that he had gone
“ through the psalter eight times in one day and night; and at
“ another time, trying his utmost, he repeated it twelve times, and
“ as far as the psalm which begins with *Beati Quorum* of the thirteenth.
“ And in repeating the psalter he did not stop at the hundred and fifty
“ psalms, but added to them the canticles, the hymns, the creed of St. Athanasius,
“ and the litanies, which are to be found at the end of the old psalters.
“ His fasting and his coat of mail made his skin as black as a negro; and besides
“ this he wore four iron rings, two on his thighs, and two on his
“ legs, to which he afterwards added four others; and besides this
“ iron shirt he had another under him to sleep upon. Notwithstanding
“ these severities, he died very old on the 14th of October 1062,
“ which day is dedicated to his honour in the calendar of the church of Rome.”
“ The austerities of Peter Damiani were similar to these, and an account of them may be seen in Fleury
vol. 13. p. 205, &c. See Priestley's *Corruptions of Christianity*,
vol. 2. p. 209, &c.

ing great resolution, and the appearance of much sanctity, with a plausible and confident manner of talking, soon gained many converts. They strongly maintained, that the office of magistracy was an encroachment on spiritual liberty; that all the distinctions occasioned by birth, rank, or wealth, should be abolished; and that all Christians, throwing their possessions into one common stock, should live in the state of equality which became members of the same family.

Among the converts of these men were Rothman, a Lutheran, who first preached the Protestant doctrine at Munster; and Cnipperdöling, a citizen of good birth and considerable eminence. Emboldened by the countenance of such disciples they openly taught their opinions; and not satisfied with that liberty, they made several attempts, though without success, to seize the town, in order to get their tenets established by public authority. At last, having secretly called in their associates from the neighbouring country, they suddenly took possession of the arsenal and senate-house in the night-time, and running through the streets with drawn swords, and horrible howlings, cried out alternately, "Repent, and be baptized," and, "Depart, ye ungodly." This was in February, 1534. The senators, the canons, the nobility, together with the more sober citizens, whether Papists or Protestants, terrified at their threats and outcries, fled in confusion,

sion, and left the city under the dominion of a frantic multitude, consisting chiefly of strangers. Nothing now remaining to overawe or controul them, they set about modelling the government according to their own extravagant ideas; and though at first they shewed so much respect for the ancient constitution, as to elect senators of their own sect, and to appoint Cnipperdoling and another proselyte consuls, this was nothing more than form: for all their proceedings were directed by Matthias, who, in the style, and with the authority of a Prophet, uttered his commandments, which it was instant death to disobey. Having begun with encouraging the multitude to pillage the churches, and deface their ornaments; he enjoined them to destroy all books except the Bible, as useless and impious; he appointed the estates of such as fled, to be confiscated, and sold to the inhabitants of the neighbouring country; he ordered every man to bring forth his gold, silver, and precious effects, and to lay them at his feet: the wealth amassed by these means, he deposited in a public treasury, and named deacons to dispense it for the common use of all. The members of this commonwealth being thus brought to a perfect equality, he commanded all of them to eat at tables prepared in public, and even prescribed the dishes which were to be served up each day. Having finished his plan of reformation, his next care was to provide for the defence of the city: and he

he took measures for that purpose with a prudence which favoured nothing of fanaticism. He collected vast magazines of every kind; he repaired and extended the fortifications, obliging every person without distinction to work in his turn; he formed such as were capable of bearing arms into regular bodies, and endeavoured to add the vigour of discipline to the impetuosity of enthusiasm. He sent emissaries to the Anabaptists in the Low-Countries, inviting them to assemble at Munster, which he dignified with the name of Mount-Sion, that from thence they might set out to reduce all the nations of the earth under their dominion. He himself was unwearied in attending to every thing necessary for the security or increase of the sect; animating his disciples by his own example to refuse no labour; as well as to repine at no hardship; and their enthusiastic passions being kept from subsiding by a perpetual succession of exhortations, revelations, and prophecies, they seemed ready to undertake or to suffer any thing in maintenance of their opinions.

While they were thus employed, the bishop of Munster having assembled a considerable army, advanced to besiege the town. On his approach, Matthias sallied out at the head of some chosen troops, attacked one quarter of his camp, forced it, and after great slaughter, returned to the city loaded

loaded with glory and spoil. Intoxicated with this success, he appeared next day brandishing a spear, and declared, that, in imitation of Gideon, he would go forth with a handful of men and smite the host of the ungodly. In the month of May, thirty persons, whom he named, followed him without hesitation in this wild enterprize, and, rushing on the enemy with a frantic courage, were cut off to a man. The death of their Prophet occasioned at first great consternation among his disciples; but Boccold, by the same gifts and pretensions which had gained Matthias credit, soon revived their spirits and hopes to such a degree, that he succeeded him in the same absolute direction of all their affairs. And though less daring in action than Matthias, he was a wilder enthusiast, and of more unbounded ambition. Soon after the death of his predecessor, having, by obscure visions and prophecies, prepared the multitude for some extraordinary event, he stripped himself naked, and marching through the streets, proclaimed with a loud voice, "That the kingdom of Sion was at hand; that whatever was highest on earth should be brought low, and whatever was lowest should be exalted." In order to fulfil this, he commanded the churches, as the most lofty buildings in the city, to be leveled with the ground; he degraded the senators chosen by Matthias, and depriving Cnipperdoling of the consulship, the highest office in the commonwealth, he appointed him to execute

execute the lowest and most infamous, that of common hangman, to which strange transition the other agreed, not only without murmuring, but with the utmost joy; and such was the despotic rigour of Boccold's administration, that he was called almost every day to perform some duty or other of his wretched function. In place of the deposed senators, he named twelve judges, according to the number of tribes in Israel, to preside in all affairs; retaining to himself the same authority which Moses anciently possessed as legislator of that people.

Not satisfied, however, with power or titles which were not supreme, a prophet, whom he had gained and tutored, having called the multitude together, declared it to be the will of God, that John Boccold should be King of Sion, and sit on the throne of David. John, kneeling down, accepted of the heavenly call, which he solemnly protested had been revealed likewise to himself, and was immediately acknowledged as Monarch by the deluded multitude. From that moment he assumed all the state and pomp of royalty. He wore a crown of gold, and was clad in the richest and most sumptuous garments. A bible was carried on his one hand, a naked sword on the other. A great body of guards accompanied him when he appeared in public. He coined money stamped with his own image, and appointed the great officers of his household and kingdom, among whom Cnipperdoling was nominated governor

governour of the city, as a reward for his former submission. All this happened in the month of June.

Having now attained the height of power, Boccold began to discover passions, which he had hitherto restrained or indulged only in secret. The minds of his deluded subjects being prepared by his prophets and teachers, he set them an example of using what he called their Christian liberty; he married three wives at once, among which the widow of Matthias, a woman of singular beauty, was one. He proceeded in the same course, as circumstances arose, till the number of his wives amounted to fourteen, though the widow of Matthias was the only one dignified with the title of Queen. After the example of their prophet, the multitude gave themselves up to the most licentious and uncontrouled gratification of their desires. No man remained satisfied with a single wife. Nor to use their Christian liberty, was deemed a crime. Persons were appointed to search the houses for young women grown up to maturity, whom they instantly compelled to marry; and every kind of excess abounded among them, of which the passions of men are capable.

Meanwhile, the bishop of Munster, aided by the German princes, blockaded the town. And, notwithstanding all their precaution, famine begun to appear. All their aids were cut off. The faith of

some gave way. But whenever they expressed their fears they were punished with immediate death. One of the King's wives, having uttered certain words, which implied some doubt concerning his divine mission, he instantly called the whole number together, and commanding the blasphemer, as he called her, to kneel down, he cut off her head with his own hands; and so far were the rest from expressing any horror at this cruel deed, that they joined him in dancing with a frantic joy around the bleeding body of their companion.

By the first of June, 1535, the besieged endured the utmost rigour of famine; but they chose rather to suffer hardships, the recital of which is shocking to humanity, than to listen to the terms of capitulation offered them by the bishop. On the twenty-fourth of the same month, however, the city was taken by means of a deserter; most of the inhabitants slain, and the remainder taken prisoners. Among the last were the King and Cnipperdoling. The King loaded with chains, was carried from city to city as a spectacle to gratify the curiosity of the people, and was exposed to all their insults. His spirit, however, was not broken or humbled by this sad reverse of his condition; and he adhered with unshaken firmness to the distinguishing tenets of his sect. After this he was brought back to Munster, the scene of his royalty and crimes, and put to death with the most exquisite as well as lingering tortures,

tortures, all which he bore with astonishing fortitude. This extraordinary man, who had been able to acquire such amazing dominion over the minds of his followers, and to excite commotions so dangerous to society, was only twenty-six years of age.

DURING the civil wars here in England, about the middle of the last century; the Puritans carried all before them. New religions sprang up like mushrooms. Among others there was a set of great pretenders to superior sanctity called Fifth-Monarchy-Men. Both church and state had been subverted some years before. But about the return of King Charles the Second these enthusiastic gentry got it into their heads, that the time was come for Christ to begin his reign of a thousand years upon earth. They even fixed the time for setting the crown upon his head. Of this the following is a remarkable instance:—In 1660, and on the very day on which Charles was crowned, a considerable number of these madmen met in Coleman-street in London, where they were headed by one Venner, a fiery ignorant preacher. In the morning he delivered a discourse to them, in

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which

*This extract of the story of the German Anabaptists is made from Robertson's History of Charles the Fifth, which the Reader would do well to peruse at large. A farther account may be seen in Sleiden's History of the Reformation in Germany; and in Jordan's Life of Erasmus.

which he told them, that the day was come when Christ was to ascend his throne. Having fired their imaginations with the highest raptures of enthusiasm, and finding them ready to obey him in every thing, he ordered them to fall forth into the streets, and kill every person who refused to join with them.

This was readily complied with, and these infatuated men made a most dreadful havock in the streets. The guards were brought to disperse them, and several of them were killed. A considerable number were taken into custody, among whom was Venner, the ringleader, who with nine of his deluded followers, were executed in different parts of the city.—This was a dreadful stroke to the Fifth-Monarchy-Men, and from that time they have made no great figure in England.*

It was likewise in the former of these eventful centuries that Vanini* figured away as an Atheist, and young Servin[†] in the latter. They were both most

*Hurd's View of all Religions, p. 674.

†This poor wretch was born in Italy, 1585, and became a man of considerable learning. He took great pains in making converts to his own atheistical opinions, and died a martyr to them in 1619, at Toulouse in France.

‡This young man was a very extraordinary character. He was born and died in France. The following account which is given of him by the celebrated Sully in his Memoirs of Henry 4th, is worthy of perusal:—"The beginning of June 1623, I set out for Calais where I was to embark, having with me a retinue of upwards of 200 gentlemen, or who called themselves such, of whom a considerable number were really of the first distinction. Just before my departure old Servin came and presented his son to me, and begged I would use my endeavours to make him a man

most extraordinary instances of atheistic bravery. For them, however, one might make some apology (if this foul crime admits of any) because they lived

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in

" of some worth and honesty; but he confessed it was what he dared not hope, not through any want of understanding or capacity in the young man, but from his natural inclination to all kinds of vice. The old man was in the right. What he told me having excited my curiosity to gain a thorough knowledge of young Ferris, I found him to be at once both a wonder and a monster; for I can give no other idea of that assemblage of the most excellent and most pernicious qualities. Let the reader represent to himself a man of a genius so lively, and an understanding so extensive, as rendered him scarce ignorant of any thing that could be known; of so vast and ready a comprehension, that he immediately made himself master of what he attempted; and of so prodigious a memory, that he never forgot what he had once learned; he possessed all parts of philosophy and the mathematics, particularly fortification and drawing: even in theology he was so well skilled, that he was an excellent preacher whenever he had a mind to exert that talent, and an able disputant for and against the reformed religion indifferently. He not only understood Greek, Hebrew, and all the languages which we call learned, but also all the different jargons or modern dialects. He accented and pronounced them so naturally, and so perfectly imitated the gestures and manners both of the several nations of Europe, and the particular provinces of France, that he might have been taken for a native of all or any of these countries. And this quality he applied to counterfeit all sorts of persons, wherein he succeeded wonderfully. He was, moreover, the best comedian and greatest droll that perhaps ever appeared. He had a genius for poetry, and had wrote many verses. He played upon almost all instruments, was a perfect master of music, and sung most agreeably and justly. He likewise could say mass; for he was of a disposition to do, as well as to know, all things. His body was perfectly well suited to his mind. He was light, nimble, dexterous, and fit for all exercises. He could ride well; and in dancing, wrestling, and leaping, he was admired. There are not any recreative games that he did not know; and he was skilled in almost all mechanic arts. But now for the reverse of the medal: here it appeared, that he was treacherous, cruel, cowardly, deceitful; a liar, a cheat, a drunk, and a glutton; a sharper in play, immersed in every species of vice, a blasphemer, an atheist. In a word; in him might be

in countries where the light of divine truth was obscured by the clouds of Popish ignorance and superstition. But what shall we say for Hacket, Aikenhead, and Hunter, three Britains, who all

died found all the vices contrary to nature, honour, religion, and society; the truth of which he himself evinced with his last breath; for he died in the flower of his age, in a common brothel, perfectly corrupted by his debaucheries; and expired with a glass in his hand, cursing and denying God. ^{Sally's Memoirs, vol. 4, p. 107.} Hacket lived in the time of queen Elizabeth. He affirmed himself to be anointed king of the earth by the Holy Ghost, and commanded his two disciples, Arthington and Coppinger, to proclaim through the streets of London, that Christ was come to judge the world, and that he might be seen at the house where Hacket lodged; and that all who refused to obey him should destroy each other, and that the Queen should be dethroned. He was convicted of high-treason, and at the place of execution, repeated the following prayer: *eternal God, thou knowest me to be the true Messiah, whom thou hast sent: shew some miracle from the clouds to convince those unbelievers, and free me from the power of my enemies.* If thou refusest to do this, I will set fire to the heavens; and, pulling thee from thy throne, will tear thee to pieces with my hands. — And, turning to the executioner, he said, Dost thou, wretch, presume to hang thy king? — Then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he cried, Thou repayest me well for a kingdom bestowed; I come to take vengeance on thee.

Aikenhead suffered for blasphemy at Edinburgh in the year 1696. He denied the Being of God, and mocked at all religion, whether natural or revealed. He belonged to a society of young men, who usually met together at a tavern, where they made it a rule, that each in his turn should burn the bible, and blaspheme the name of God. He was burnt alive.

Hunter was a young student in divinity, and was hung in chains at Broughton, near Edinburgh, for murdering two young gentlemen, the sons of a Mr. Gordon, whose tutor he was. He breathed out his soul, avowing he believed there was no God; or, if there was one, defying him to do his worst. — This account of these unhappy men is mostly taken from Hurd's View of all Religions; p. 142. The history of Hunter I have seen somewhere more at large; but I cannot now recollect where.

died denying the existence, or blaspheming the name of the Almighty? Or what can be advanced in behalf of Mr. William Hammon,⁹ junior, late of Liverpool, who even now, in this enlightened and philosophic age, will needs persuade us of the same thing?¹⁰ These are monsters in human form, ene-

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mies

⁹This strange man avows his atheism in the most notorious and impudent manner. "To put it out of all manner of doubt," says he, "whether there ever was such a person as a proper atheist, I do declare, that, upon my honour, I am one. Be it, therefore, for the future remembered, that in London, in the kingdom of England, in the year of our Lord 1781, a man hath publicly declared himself an atheist."—Nay he even professes his readiness to suffer martyrdom in this cause, and to glory in it.

See Hammon's Answer to Dr. Priestley's Letters to a philosophical Unbeliever, pref. p. 17, 21.—Likewise Monthly Review for February 1783, p. 129, 131.—See also Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, vol. 1. p. 238.

¹⁰Dr. Priestley says, in the Preface to his Letters to Mr. Bourn, that "the greater part of his philosophical acquaintance ridicule his belief of Christianity." He tells us still farther, that "when he was at Paris, after a very free and serious conversation on the subject of religion, he was told by one of the company, that he was the only person they had ever met with, of whose understanding they had any opinion, who pretended to believe Christianity." He adds, "A very sincere catholic priest, hearing that on all occasions he avowed his belief of Christianity, embraced him with tears literally running down his cheeks, saying, that all who were called *philosophers* that he had met with before were *atheists*." The account which Dr. Priestley here gives us of the state of things in France has been confirmed by the conduct of the National Assembly in various instances. A paragraph in the Evening Mail for January 25th to the 27th, is directly in point.

Paris, Jan. 22, 1792.

"Such, and so rapid is the progress of irreligion, as well as of philosophy, that a book, professedly written against Christianity, and presented to the National Assembly, was loudly applauded, and honourable mention of the author ordered to be made in the Journals of the Assembly."

mies to their own race, who would rob mankind of their dearest hopes, convert the present world into delusive phantoms, and annihilate the next, that we may be at liberty to indulge our passions without controul. Voltaire¹¹ and Bolingbroke, with various others of a similar description, have done their best to convince the world, that there is no Saviour, and that we have no need of any such interposition as the gospel supposes.

It was about the beginning of the present century, in the reign of queen Ann, that the French Prophets, as they were then called, made a vast noise in Europe. Many of them came over into England, and run into the utmost extremes of folly and delusion. I will produce a specimen. One of these fanatics having asserted, that in proof of his divine mission, he would die on a particular day, and on the third day he would rise from the dead; a wag present, laid him a wager on the strength of his prophecy. The Prophet, who knew not in
what

Atheism is said to be rampant at this time in France. But this, it seems, is nothing new; for Marsennus, in his commentary on Genesis, tells us, that in the year 1623, there was a vast multitude of them in France; that there were at least 50,000 Atheists at that time in the city of Paris, and that in one house sometimes a dozen were to be found. And about the same time the Author of a book called *Speculum Europæ* tells us, that atheism was very common and rampant in most parts of Italy.

See Edwards' *Thoughts on Atheism*, p. 127.

¹¹The life of Bolingbroke, and the death of Voltaire, contain no contemptible argument for the fallacy of their religious opinions. The one lived immorally, the other died wretchedly.

See *Sacred Literature*, vol. 1. p. 114, 133—139.

what manner the *materia medica* operated, resolved to try the experiment, and the day was fixed. In the mean time the Enthusiast went to the father of the gentleman already mentioned, who kept an apothecary's shop in Old-street. He asked for as much opium as would make him sleep one night. Having obtained that, he bought twice as much, vainly imagining, that if one third part of the quantity would make him sleep one night, the remainder would make him sleep two nights more, after which he would arise from the dead, and give a convincing proof of his mission.

Accordingly he swallowed the three doses of opium, and his friends, who had been let into the secret of his design, and who were as ignorant as himself, had him interred in the burying ground belonging to the parish church of Cripplegate, situated in White-cross-street. The fraternity of Prophets continued singing hymns round the grave till the expiration of the three days, and the people in the neighbourhood were driven to such a state of expectation, that they neglected their lawful employments to behold this miraculous event.

At last the appointed time arrived; thousands and ten thousands of souls attended, and the grave was opened; but alas! instead of the Prophet's making his appearance in the land of the living, the coroner issued his warrant for a jury to be summoned, to enquire in what manner he came by his death.

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The verdict was found, self-murder, and he was buried with a stake drove through his body in the cross-way near Dog-house bar.

This was a fatal blow to the French Prophets; their credit sunk into contempt, and they have dwindled away in such a gradual manner, that little or no remains of them are now left.¹³

SECTION III.

IT would be well if fanaticism and erroneous opinions were confined to the vulgar and illiterate. But this is by no means the case. Bolingbroke and Voltaire, just mentioned, were men of very uncommon talents. And about the commencement of this century also lived the learned Dodwell. He undertook to prove the natural mortality of human souls.¹⁴ At the same time, the ingenious Mr. Apgill was busy in attempting to ascertain, that, according to the covenant of eternal life revealed in the scriptures, man may be translated from hence, without passing through death.¹⁵ I never heard, however, but that the said Mr. Apgill died *the common death of all men*. What became of the soul of Dodwell, we know not. He is with God, and shall be judged according to his works.—

Moreover,

¹³Hurd's View of all Religions, p. 672.

¹⁴See his Epistolary Discourse on the Soul.

¹⁵See his book entitled, An Argument proving, that according to the covenant of eternal Life, &c.

Moreover, even in our own times, we have had an account of a Mrs. Buchan in Scotland, who has put herself at the head of a sect, promising her deluded followers they shall never die, but be translated, by an agreeable change, to meet the Lord in the air.³⁵ But notwithstanding all her pretensions to the contrary, the Lord is not yet come, and the periodical prints have informed us, she is now no more. And, as though the hypothesis of escaping the dominion of the king of terrors was not sufficiently extravagant, even the very learned bishop Berkley labours to establish in the minds of men, that there is no such thing as matter in the world; and, of consequence, that we have no bodies.³⁶

Mr.

³⁵See *European Mag.* for Jan. 1785, p. 7. and do. for Dec. 1786, p. 465.—We have two relations of a similar kind in the Life of the late Rev. John Wesley, by Mr. Hamson, vol. 2. p. 304. and 316. George Bell, a serjeant in the guards, prophesied the end of the world should be on the last day of February, 1763. and alarmed a large part of the metropolis. And in the year 1789, it was revealed to a young girl in the bishopric of Durham, that on a certain day in that year, the wicked should be swept, with the besom of destruction, from the face of the earth. Many gave credit to the prediction, and flocked to the deluded enthusiast from all quarters. Time is the best detector of all such fanatical pretensions.

³⁶See his Principles of Human Knowledge, and Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.—The Bishop's scheme is not, says Dr. Doddridge, “that sensible objects have no real existence; or that all is but a waking dream; he disclaims both these. His principle is, that no sensible object exists unperceived; or more plainly, that there is no material world; and that primary, as well as secondary qualities, do only exist in the mind perceiving them; so that if all minds were annihilated, all bodies would be annihilated too; and that the difference between dreaming and perceiving, is only that the latter is more active, regular, and vivid, than the former.”

Lectures, p. 101.

Mr. Hume, with a manifest intention of subverting the gospel of Christ, has undertaken to prove, that because we have now no experience of miracles being wrought, therefore a miracle is incapable of proof."

Monfieur Freret, member of the academy of Inscriptions at Paris, and secretary to the Society at Berlin, levels the whole fabric of religion at once. He has done by the gospel as the French have done by their old constitution. The New Testament, says he, is all a forgery, contrived about Constantine's time, and is never once mentioned by the first Christian writers."

Rousseau, one of the finest, yet most eccentric geniuses the world ever produced, hath laboured with all his ingenuity to establish the legitimacy of suicide, that whenever we are out of humour with the world we are at liberty to destroy ourselves in what way soever we judge expedient."

The late Mr. Toplady was indefatigable in preaching and writing to prove, that the doctrines of absolute, unconditional election and reprobation, without

"See his *Essays*.

"Voltaire in the *Shades*, p. 47.—This assertion is as contrary to truth and matter of fact as light is to darkness. See Lardner's testimonies. Let the Reader, who is affected with this most audacious declaration, consult also Michaelis's *Lectures on the New Testament*, sect. 2.

"See his *Eloise*.

without the smallest qualification, are revealed in holy scripture as the truths of God; and that a very small number of the adult part of mankind, comparatively speaking, is included in this awful decree."

Mr. Jeremiah White," Mr. Hartley," and many others, on the contrary, good men and true, were equally zealous in propagating the doctrine of universal restitution, asserting, that not only all mankind will be finally saved, but that even the devils themselves shall be delivered out of their infernal abodes, and made the monuments of God's everlasting complacency and delight.

The late Emanuel Swedenborg was a man of great seeming piety, and of undoubted learning. He began, if we may credit his own declarations, a new dispensation of religion." Various of his followers,

men

"See his "Translation of Zanchius, and Vindication of the Decrees," passim.

"See his book entitled, "The Restoration of all Things."

"See his works, passim.

"The Baron's own account is as follows. "I was at London," says he, "and dined late at my usual inn, where I had a room kept for me, that I might have the liberty to meditate in peace on spiritual things. I had felt myself pressed by hunger, and was eating very heartily. Towards the end of the meal, I perceived that a kind of a mist came over my eyes, and I saw the floor of the room covered with frightful reptiles, such as serpents, toads, caterpillars, and others. Their number appeared to encrease as the darkness did, but soon passed away. After that, I saw clearly a man in the midst of a bright and shining light sitting in a corner of the room. I was alone, and you may judge of the consternation I was in, when I heard him pronounce distinctly, and in a sound of voice very capable of striking terror, *Eat not so much*. After these words, my sight began to grow obscure, but came to, by little and little, and then I saw myself alone in the room. Still a little frightened at what I had seen, I made haste to my own apartment, without speaking to any one of what had

men of equal seeming piety and sincerity with himself, at least, if not of equal learning, are straining every nerve to establish a kind of Sabellianism, and a number of other old exploded heresies, with the addition

“ happened to me. I there reflected seriously on it, and could find
 “ no reason to suppose it to be an effect from chance, or any physical
 “ cause.

“ The following night, the same person appeared to me, in a
 “ strong shining light, and said,—I AM GOD THE LORD,
 “ THE CREATOR AND REDEEMER; I HAVE CHOSEN
 “ THEE TO EXPLAIN TO MEN THE INTERIOR
 “ AND SPIRITUAL SENSE OF THE SACRED WRITINGS. I WILL DICTATE UNTO THEE WHAT
 “ YOU OUGHT TO WRITE.—I was not at all frightened
 “ now, and the light with which he was encompassed, although very
 “ bright and resplendent, occasioned no painful impression on
 “ my eyes. He was clothed in purple, and the vision lasted a full
 “ quarter of an hour. That same night were the eyes of my spirit
 “ opened, and disposed so that I might have a spiritual sight of
 “ heaven, the world of spirits, and the hells; and I found every
 “ where many persons of my own acquaintance; some of them
 “ deceased a long, and others but a short time.

“ From that day I gave up all my worldly occupations, that I
 “ might have leisure to employ myself in spiritual ones, in conformity
 “ to the command I had received.

“ It happened often unto me after that period, that my spiritual
 “ sight was opened so far, that I could see in the most clear and
 “ distinct manner, what passed in the spiritual world, and converse
 “ with angels and spirits, in the same manner as I speak with men.
 “ Again, in another place :—“ The Lord, our Saviour, manifested
 “ himself to me in a sensible personal appearance; he commanded
 “ me to write what has already been done, and what I have still to
 “ do; he was afterwards graciously pleased to endow me with the
 “ privilege of conversing with angels and spirits, and to be in fellowship
 “ with them.—I am ready to testify with the most solemn
 “ oath that can be offered in this matter, that I have said nothing
 “ but essential and real truth, without any mixture of deception.”

This is the Baron's own account of his miraculous call. It is no
 difficult matter to give him credit for his piety and good intentions.
 But we need only peruse his visions and interpretations of holy

¹Sandels' Eulogium on Swedenborg, p. 28.

²Ibid. p. 21

on of a comfortable variety of new ones, such as never before entered into the pericranium of any human being, which they meet with in the writings of their learned Founder.

A scripture to be fully satisfied, that he laboured under a derangement of intellect of a peculiar nature. In this respect he was to be pitied, rather than blamed. Nor is there any thing very uncommon in his situation. The pious and learned Simon Browne was for many years persuaded God had destroyed the intellectual principle within him; and "whilst he was under the influence of this " strange frenzy, it was extremely remarkable, that his faculties " appeared to be in every other respect in their full vigour. He " continued to apply himself to his studies, and discovered the " same force of understanding which had formerly distinguished " him, both in his conversation and in his writings." Somewhat similar is the state of one of the first literary characters of the present day; only with this difference, that whereas Mr. Browne thought he had no soul, the learned gentleman in question imagines he has no body: and when a friend has been introduced to him, he would answer upon being asked whether he knew the person, " O yes, I recollect you perfectly well in the other world: you " were so and so employed." Swedenborg was doubtless like these gentlemen; and not unlike to his state also was that of the man of Argos in Greece,

" Qui se credebat miros audire tragædos,

" In vacuo lætus sessor, plausorque theatro."

" Who wond'rous tragedies was wont to hear

" Sitting alone in th' empty theatre."

Besides the above peculiar instances of mental derangement, I myself have personally known more than one instance of a similar kind. That the Baron therefore should labour under such a disorder, and that he should be able to write many books during the continuance of it, is not so extraordinary. But, that pious, sensible men should indefatigably labour to convince the world, of the truth, reality, and importance of all his strange reveries, is truly astonishing, and cannot so easily be accounted for. It may indeed be said, that his writings, if we are much conversant with them, will either find us deranged, or make us so. I know no books in the world so likely to effect this purpose as his and the Teutonic philosopher's. They were kindred souls. The Baron's great learning, however, gave

^a *Biographia Britannica.*

^b *Horat. Epist. l. 2. ep. 2. l. 129. 130.*

A few years ago, I think it was in 1783, a young Presbyterian clergyman, with all the prejudices upon his mind against Popery, which usually distinguish that class of men, set sail from America, and visited France, England, and Italy. In the last of these countries he staid a considerable time; and, at length, became a convert to all the peculiarities of the Roman religion. After he had been pretty well confirmed in his new faith, he sailed to his native country again, and has formed to himself a plan of converting as many of the Americans as possible to his new opinions. He has also published his own life and wonderful conversion, and seems to be enflamed with a mighty zeal for the salvation of his countrymen. That the young man means well is pretty evident. And he writes in favour of all the absurdities of Popery with a good deal of plausibility. The book is cried up among the members of that Communion as a thing very extraordinary. But any person of the least discernment, whose mind is not unreasonably preoccupied in favour of a party, may easily discover the sophistry and false

him vast advantage, and he bids fair for being the head of a considerable party in this country. The more absurd his notions, the more likely they are to take with a certain description of our fellow creatures. If his treatise on heaven and hell will not satisfy any man, that the above assertions concerning his derangement are founded in truth, it must be said, such a reader is far advanced in the same disorder.—He denies the resurrection of the dead, tells us that the last judgment took place in the year 1757, that the spiritual kingdom of Christ commenced on the 19th day of June, 1770, and that his own doctrine is speedily to prevail over the whole world, and to continue forever!

false reasoning which runs through the little performance. It is curious to see a Presbyterian parson addressing himself to the virgin Mary, and vowing in future to make it his business to promote her cause. "Oh tender Mother," said he, "if it be lawful for me to implore thy succour, help me in the miserable state in which I am. It was through thee that the Saviour came to us; it is through thee that I desire to go to him. The scriptures teach me, that by thy means was wrought the first miracle of the evangelical law in the order of grace, the sanctification of St. John the Baptist, and the first in the order of nature, the change of water into wine. Here remains another to be performed; do not refuse to employ thy credit; I do not deserve it; too long have I not known thee; but now, though with fear and trembling, I begin to address thee; intercede for me with thy Divine Son." Then turning to Christ, "Oh Lord," said he, "I implore thy light; thou hast promised to listen to those who invoke thee; I do it from the bottom of my heart: thou art my witness that I seek truth at whatever expence: I cannot err in addressing my supplications to thy blessed Mother: Thou thyself wouldst be the cause of my error."—Then he adds—"Confidence and tranquillity were the fruits of this prayer. From that time I have always had recourse to the blessed Virgin, and I am

“ confident that I have received grace through her
 “ intercession; gratitude obliges me to make this
 “ acknowledgment. I endeavour to join in every
 “ institution which tends to her honour, and I have
 “ pledged myself, and study as much as can depend
 “ on me, to extend the devotion to this dear Mo-
 “ ther of God.”

A little after, this well-meaning idolater adds—
 “ The truths, which I had most difficulty in believing,
 “ are those in which I now find the greatest conso-
 “ lation. The mystery of the eucharist, which ap-
 “ peared to me so incredible, is become an ever-
 “ flowing source of spiritual delight. Confession,
 “ which I had considered as an insupportable yoke,
 “ seems infinitely sweet, by the tranquillity which it
 “ produces in the soul. Oh! if Protestants and
 “ unbelievers could taste those sweets which are felt
 “ at the foot of the altar, they would soon alter their
 “ sentiments! Oh! that I could be heard by them
 “ all, I would cry out to them; Taste and see how
 “ sweet and good is the Lord to those who serve
 “ him in the holy society, which he has formed
 “ himself, and which he vivifies by his Spirit. This
 “ is the prevailing wish, this is the only desire of my
 “ heart, to extend as much as lies in my power, the
 “ dominion of the true faith, which is now my joy
 “ and comfort. I ambition nothing more: for this
 “ purpose I desire to return to my own country, in
 “ hopes, notwithstanding my unworthiness, to be
 “ the

“ the instrument of the conversion of my country-
“ men. And such is my conviction of the truth of
“ the Roman Catholic church, and my gratitude
“ for the signal grace of being called to the true
“ faith, that I would willingly seal it with my blood,
“ if God would grant me this favour, and I doubt
“ not but he would enable me to do it. I entreat
“ all those who shall peruse this narrative, to pray
“ with fervour the Father of Lights, and the God
“ of Mercies, to bless the designs of his unworthy
“ servant, and to open an easy access to the faith in
“ my country, and to cause it to shoot forth and
“ fructify in a land in which it has never yet been
“ professed. Perhaps, and I dwell with pleasure
“ on the consoling thought, perhaps, I say, he who
“ raises up, and casts down empires, as he pleases,
“ who does all for his elect, and for the interest of
“ his church, has only permitted and brought to an
“ end, the surprising revolution of which we have
“ been witnesses, in order to accomplish some great
“ design, and much more happy revolution in the
“ order of grace.”

Nothing less, we see, than the conversion of all
America to the Roman Catholic religion can satisfy
the wishes, and expectations of this zealous young
man!

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²See an Account of the Conversion of the Rev. John Thayer,
lately a Protestant Minister at Boston in North America.

The late Mr. Whiston was apparently not less pious, sincere, and learned than any of the former; and it is well known he was a violent opposer of the Socinians,² and ready to compass sea and land to make proselytes to the system of Arius.

The present³ venerable Dr. Price,⁴ and other dissenting teachers, are embarked in the same cause; and, with much warmth, and considerable ability, are still labouring to promote the interests of that party.

SECTION

²Giving advice for the study of divinity, he says, "As for those real errors and heresies, which so much infest the Christian world, I mean new and pernicious doctrines, which have neither foundation in scripture nor antiquity, I think this method of study in divinity, if once generally obtained, would go a great way towards their utter exclusion and extirpation. For instance, this method would destroy the strange doctrine of the Socinians, who by a sad *αμετρία της ανβολης* have been so affrighted by the modern, absurd, and unjustifiable notions about the ever-blessed Trinity, that they are gone with a witness into the opposite extreme, and not only deny our Lord's original divinity, which is every where so plain in scripture and antiquity; but affirm that he had no existence till he was born of the blessed Virgin, quite contrary to the entire current of the scripture, and of all the most ancient Christian writers."

Advice for the Study of Divinity, p. 291.

³The Doctor was living when this was written.

⁴The Doctor says, when speaking of the divine nature and generation of our blessed Saviour—"There is scarcely any thing that strikes me more, with a conviction of the infirmity of the human understanding, than the zeal with which this most groundless and absurd notion has been received by some of the ablest and best men."—This is too positive. While he blames others, he himself is to be blamed. While he talks of the infirmity of others, he himself gives us an example of it in himself. The Doctor should have considered, that the understandings of other men may be as good as his own, and equally as capable of discovering the truth or fallacy of any particular doctrine of divine revelation. His Ser-

SECTION IV.

AND even now, while Hammon is pleasing himself with sowing the seeds of atheism; the disciples of Voltaire with propagating deism; the followers of Swedenborg with advancing the New Jerusalem dispensation; Thayer with converting the Americans to Popery; and Price and others with degrading their Saviour and Sanctifier to the head of the angelic orders; Dr. Priestley is insist-

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ing

mons contain many good things, and upon the whole there is an amiable spirit running through the whole. His reasonings, however, are in several instances defective and inconclusive; and less dogmaticalness would have become him well. The Doctor's mind is not of that size to justify his absolute determinations upon subjects where the greatest and best of men have been of a different opinion.

I happened to be in London on Nov. 4, 1789, when the Doctor preached his "Discourse on the Love of our Country," and had the curiosity to go and hear it. The Doctor delivered it with all the animation of which he was capable, and the great bulk of the congregation received it with equal ardour. In all those parts of the discourse where he advanced any thing peculiarly severe against Kings, Monarchies, and Ministers, the people seemed so pleased and elated, that they were ready to clap the venerable old Gentleman. The sermon however is before the public, and they have formed their opinions upon it. It undoubtedly contains many good things; and, I confess, the Doctor is with me, in several respects, a favourite writer. But I neither approve his Arian sentiments, which I am confident he has not established; nor can I see the propriety of his theologico-politico-discourse. The Doctor was a well-meaning, mistaken man; but yet a man, who had the happiness of mankind much at heart.

*How contrary to the above matters of fact is the address of Dr. Priestley to the inhabitants of Birmingham? "You are told," says he "that there are many deep mysteries in religion, and therefore that your clergy must teach you what to think, or rather what to say about them. But be persuaded to think better of

ing upon it with full as much confidence as any of the former, that all the Christian world is now wrong, and hath been wrong, almost ever since the death

" yourselves and of your own understandings. These things are
 " not in reality of so difficult a nature as many things in your com-
 " mon trade, and businesses. The most important questions rela-
 " ting to religion are the plainest things in the world, and require
 " nothing but a common understanding, honestly applied, to com-
 " prehend them." Part 3. p. 22.

If the deep things of religion are so very easy to be comprehended, whence all this difference of opinion among men, who are naturally the best qualified to judge? The Doctor's assertions are in direct opposition to matter of fact and experience. Do not the Arians oppose the Trinitarians, the Trinitarians the Arians, and the Socinians both? And have not each of the schemes men of very considerable learning and abilities to defend them? Dr. Priestley seems here to forget, that the moral qualities are, at least, of as great consequence as the natural in the discovery of religious truth. A man may be a great mathematician, logician, metaphysician, mechanic, hydrostatician, pneumatician, electrician, or even what is usually called a philosopher, and yet be a stranger to most of those dispositions which are essentially necessary to the discovery of religious truth. An humble mind, sincerity of soul, pious inclinations, an earnest wish and endeavour to know and do the whole will of God so far as we know it, a prayerful spirit, divine illumination, these and such as these are the qualifications which are necessary to constitute any man a true Christian. And let a man's natural abilities and human attainments be what they may: if he is a walking library; if his head contains the principles of all arts and sciences, human and divine, yet if he is destitute of the above moral and religious qualifications he will never arrive at the knowledge of saving truth. For if St. Paul's opinion may have any weight, and this be not one of those places where he reasons inconclusively, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. 2. 14.—See also Mat. 11. 25, and Jas. 1. 5.—Great abilities and great attainments are usually a great snare. Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth. *The meek will God guide in judgement, and the meek will he learn his way*, Ps. 25. 9.

Upon another occasion, when it suits his purpose, Dr. Priestley speaks of passages of scripture being "highly figurative, and peculiarly difficult to understand." Familiar Illustration, p. 3.

death of our blessed Saviour;⁶ that most of the Fathers, Martyrs and Confessors lived and died gross idolaters; that religion never had been understood till Socinus arose in the sixteenth century; nay, that Socinus himself, in contending for the adoration of Jesus Christ, was capitally mistaken; and that the world, for the last seventeen hundred years, never hath had proper views of religious truth, till now that it has been enlightened by himself and fellow-labourers in the good work. Thus, respecting the person of our Saviour, one cries, Lo! this is the nature of Christ, and you must believe as I do: Another, This is the nature of Christ, and you must believe as I do: And a third, You are all egregiously mistaken, for this is the nature of Christ, and the whole world will be of my opinion in a little time.⁷ One assures us with mighty zeal, that Christ

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was

“It is an easy matter for men of wit and fancy to find fault with any thing! but it requires thought and judgment to settle things upon their true bottom. Let those who are displeased with the received doctrine, shew us a better, and form any other consistent scheme (consistent with scripture and with itself) if they can. Wise and good men will be always willing to reform, if there be cause for it; but they will not be forward to pull down what appears to be founded upon a rock, in order only to build upon the sand. The Trinitarians have some satisfaction in observing, how long certain great wits have been employed in new-modelling Christianity, and have not yet been able to agree in any one certain scheme.”

An Author quoted by bishop Horne in his Sermon on contending for the Faith.

⁷See Dr. Priestley's Importance of Free Inquiry, passim.

of the angelic order; another informs us with equal confidence, that Christ is both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and a third will needs persuade us, with a positiveness not in the least inferior to either of the former, that "Christ is a *mere* man like ourselves;" the son of Joseph and Mary;" capable "of misapplying the scriptures of the Old Testament;" naturally fallible, peccable, weak like "other men; liable to sin, as well as subject to "error."²

Upon Dr. Priestley's hypothesis, that Christ is no more than a *mere* man, I am free to acknowledge the truth of almost every thing he advances in his observations on the inspiration of Christ. The essay is well written; and very plausible; "but all is false "and hollow." The Doctor is an ingenious man, and can "make the worse appear the better reason:" but I deny each of the above positions with all the earnestness of which I am capable of speaking. I deny absolutely, that Christ was a *mere* man—that he was the *natural* son of Joseph and Mary—that he was capable of misapplying the scriptures of the Old Testament—that he was naturally fallible, peccable,

²See Dr. Priestley's Letters to Dr. Price, *passim*.

³*Ibid.* pages 152 and 172.

⁴*Ibid.* page 148, &c.

⁵See Theological Repository, vol. 4. p. 435—461.—See also Letters to Mr. Burn, p. 2. where Dr. Priestley acknowledges himself the author of those papers in the Repository, which speak of Christ in this degrading manner.

cable, weak, like other men—that he was liable to sin, as well as subject to error.—Every one of these positions I deny, and must say with Dr. Price, Dr. Priestley's particular friend; “It appears to me, that the doctrine of Christ's simple humanity, when viewed in connexion with the scripture account of his exaltation, implies an inconsistency, and improbability, which falls little short of an impossibility; and, consequently, that this doctrine not only renders the scriptures *unintelligible*, but Christianity itself *incredible*.”

Without entering, however, into a discussion of these several particulars at large, I will only refer the Reader at present, to a few of the many scriptures, which seem to me to disprove and subvert his whole system. The Doctor, no doubt, thinks otherwise. I will therefore produce them, and appeal to all candid men, for a fair and just interpretation.

The first passages of holy scripture, to which I would call the attention of the serious Reader, are those where Christ is called God: Ps. 45. 6, compared with Heb. 1. 8.—Ps. 68. 18, compared with Ep. 4. 8.—Ps. 102. 24, 25, 26, 27, compared with Heb. 1. 10, 11, 12.—Isaiah 9. 6.—Mat. 1. 23.—John 1. 1, 14.—John 10. 33.—John 20. 28.—Acts 20. 28.—Rom. 9. 5.—Gal. 1. 1, 12.—Col. 2. 9.—1 Tim. 3. 16.—Tit. 2. 13.—1 John 5. 20.

Secondly,

³Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, p. 146.

Secondly, Those where he is called the Son of God, and his only-begotten Son, one and equal with his Father; the most remarkable of which are these: Ps. 2. 12.—Mat. 11. 27.—Ibid. 14. 33.—Ibid. 16. 26.—Ibid. 26. 63, 64.—Mark 14. 61, 62.—Luke 10. 22.—Ibid. 22. 70, 71.—John 1. 14, 18, 49.—Ibid. 3. 16.—Ibid. 5. 18.—Acts 8. 37.—Ibid. 9. 20.—Rom. 1. 3, 4.—Ibid. 5. 10.—Ibid. 8. 3, 32.—1 Cor. 1. 9.—2 Cor. 1. 19.—Heb. 1. 2, 5.—Ibid. 3. 6.—Ibid. 4. 14.—Ibid. 5. 8.—1 John 2. 22, 23, 24.—Ibid. 4. 9, 10, 15.

Thirdly, Those where he is called Lord, and the supreme Lord; the chief of which are these:—Luke 1. 16, 43.—Ibid. 2. 11.—Acts 10. 36.—1 Cor. 5. 4, 5.—Ibid. 8. 6.—Ibid. 12. 3.—Ibid. 15. 47.—1 Tim. 6. 15.—Rev. 19. 16.

Fourthly, Those where he is said to be worshipped and prayed to:—Mat. 2. 11.—Ibid. 14. 33.—Ibid. 28. 9.—Ibid. 28. 19.—John 5. 23.—Ibid. 9. 38.—Acts 7. 59.—2 Cor. 13. 14.—1 Thes. 3. 11.—2 Thes. 2. 16, 17.—Heb. 1. 6.—Rev. 1. 6.—Ibid. 5. 8, 13.

Fifthly, We find the incommunicable attributes of God ascribed to him, namely, creation, eternity, omnipotence, almighty power, that of forgiving sins, of dispensing all spiritual graces, of sending the Holy Ghost:—John 1. 3, 10.—1 Cor. 8. 6.—Col. 1. 16, 17.—

John 1. 1, 2, 15, 30.—Ibid. 6. 62.—Ibid. 8. 58.—Ibid. 17. 5.—Col. 1. 15.—Rev. 1. 17.—

Mat;

Mat. 18. 20.—Ibid. 28. 20.—John 1. 48, 49.
—Ibid. 2. 24, 25.—Ibid. 3. 13.—Ibid. 16. 30.—
Ibid. 21. 17.—Rev. 2. 23.—

John 5. 21.—Acts 9. 34.—Phil. 3. 21.—
Heb. 1. 3.

Mat. 9. 2—6.—Mark 2. 5—12.—Luke 5. 18
—26.—Ibid. 7. 48.—Col. 3. 13.—

Rom. 1. 7.—Gal. 1. 3.—Ibid. 6. 18.—Ep.
1. 2.—Ibid. 6. 23.—Phil. 1. 19.—1 Thes. 1. 1.—
1 Tim. 1. 12.—2 Tim. 1. 2.—2 John 3.

John 16. 7.

Lastly, He is said to have been a sacrifice and a
ransom for our sins, and to have made a propitiati-
on and reconciliation for us; all which could no
more have been done by the blood of a *mere* man,
than by the blood of bulls and goats:—Is. 53. 4, 5,
6.—Mat. 20. 28.—Ibid. 26. 28.—Mark 10. 45.—
Rom. 3. 24, 25.—Ibid. 4. 25.—Ibid. 5. 10.—
1 Cor. 1. 30.—Ibid. 5. 7.—Ibid. 15. 3.—2 Cor.
5. 18, 19, 21.—Gal. 1. 4.—Ibid. 2. 20.—Ep. 1. 7.
—Ibid. 5. 2.—Col. 1. 14.—1 Thes. 1. 10.—Ibid. 5.
9, 10.—Heb. 9. 28.—1 Pet. 2. 24.—1 John 3. 16.
—Ibid. 4. 10, 14.—Rev. 1. 5, 6.—Ibid. 5. 9, 10.
—Ibid. 7. 14.

Besides the above passages of holy scripture there
are many others from which the divinity of our
blessed Saviour may be rightly inferred; but these
seem

seem to me more than sufficient to convince any man, who has a due regard to the sacred writings.*

After speaking thus disrespectfully, or rather thus degradingly and blasphemously, of the Son of God and Saviour of men, we shall not wonder to hear the gentleman say, that “ he thinks himself at liberty to
 “ consider the history which Moses has given us of
 “ the creation and fall of man, as the best he could
 “ collect from tradition, and that in his opinion al-
 “ so there are many marks of its being a very lame
 “ account; and far from solving the difficulty, which
 it

“ It is the constant tenor of scripture, that atonement for the
 “ sins of the world was made by our great High-priest upon
 “ the cross; that his death was our redemption, and his blood the
 “ price paid for us.”

Bishop Sherlock's Discourses at the Temple church, p. 212.

Dr. Watts also declares—“ To me it is evident as the sun-beams,
 “ that while the New Testament restores natural religion to us in
 “ the brightest and fairest light, and lays the strongest obligations
 “ on us to perform all the duties of it; yet it still supposes the im-
 “ possibility of our salvation thereby, through our own incapacity
 “ to perform these duties perfectly; and therefore it sets forth to
 “ our view the blessed sacrifice of the Son of God, which is the
 “ only true and proper atonement for our sins.”

Redeemer and Sanctifier, p. 27.

“ The redemption of mankind by the death of Christ, and the
 “ sacrifice of himself upon the cross, together with its consequent
 “ doctrine of justification by faith alone, were the great gospel
 “ principles on which Protestantism was founded, on the first ge-
 “ neral separation from the church of Rome.—The doctrine of re-
 “ demption, is the *primum mobile* of the gospel-system. To this
 “ the church must steadily adhere, let the storm against it beat from
 “ what quarter it may. It is the first duty of the ministers of re-
 “ ligion to secure this great foundation.” Bishop Warburton's
 “ Doctrine of Grace, p. 230, 237.

“ it seems intended to answer, namely, the introduction of death and calamity into the world.”

Again:—“ It is *generally* thought that we are at liberty to suppose, that by days in the Mosaical account of the creation, long periods of an indefinite length were intended.”

Is it *generally* thought so? I believe not. The great bulk of mankind, I apprehend, understand the history of the creation just as it is, without any quibble, evasion, or refinement. If the Doctor means only, that the great bulk of the learned understand it as he supposes: In this supposition also I rather think he is mistaken. The orthodox of every denomination are of a different opinion. And they are, probably, a much greater number than those who differ from them. What the Doctor says then is not true, that it is *generally thought* the days mentioned in the history of the creation were not natural days.

Again:—

“ Much more honourable and becoming is the opinion of the pious and excellent Mr. Matthew Henry. “ Some think,” says he, “ the book of Genesis was written by Moses when he was in Midian, for the instruction and comfort of his suffering brethren in Egypt. I rather think he wrote it in the wilderness, after he had been in the mount with God, where probably he received full and particular instructions for the writing of it. And as he framed the tabernacle, so he did the more excellent and durable fabric of this book, exactly according to the pattern shewed him in the mount; into which it is better to resolve the certainty of the things herein contained, than into any tradition which possibly might be handed down from Adam to Methuselah, from him to Shem, from him to Abraham, and so to the family of Jacob.”

⁶ Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 29.

⁷ Introduction to the book of Genesis.

Again:—"There are few persons indeed, who are willing to admit that the account (of the creation by Moses) is literally true." The Doctor then adds as a reason for this assertion:—"Because, judging from the analogy of the divine dispensations, they think, that so much of *interposition*, and *deviation from regular laws*, was not necessary; and they cannot help thinking it improbable, considering the slowness with which the course of nature proceeds, that the constitution of things should have advanced so very rapidly at its first establishment." Here again, I apprehend, the Doctor is guilty of an erroneous assertion, since there is no reason to doubt but that the great bulk of Christians believe the creation to have taken place exactly as it is described by Moses.* There may be a few sceptics, and a few unbelievers to be found among speculative men, but the large body of serious and sober Christians are now, and have been in every age, firm believers in the cosmogony of Moses.

The

*Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 29.

"Most of the Commentators of the Old Testament, except infidels, and freethinkers, believed every particular of the first chapter of Genesis to be true in itself; though perhaps they might not take it right."—

"As to the holy Fathers, and other orthodox expositors of holy writ, these believing the whole text to be divinely inspired, as undoubtedly it is, might very safely and justly search after different meanings of the text."

Berington's Dissertations on the Mosaical Creation, p. 60, 66.

The reason the Doctor gives for not believing it, is truly curious; and, as it seems to me, utterly unworthy of a man who has gained a just reputation in philosophical pursuits. He says, there was "too much of interposition and deviation from regular laws." Other men, however, will probably think, that as the world was incapable of forming itself, or even of contributing to it in the smallest degree, the *whole was interposition.*

As to its being a deviation from regular laws, this could not be. There were no regular laws, but those of creation. The course of nature was not established. It could not therefore be a deviation. The whole process, no doubt, was agreeable to its own proper laws. But as creation is an unique, and the general laws of it are described no where, with proper authority, but by Moses, and in a manner which hath often been cavilled with, but never refuted, it seems unphilosophical, as well as untheological, to call it a deviation from regular laws.

But

"The volumes of interpreters, and commentators on the Old and New Testament, are but too manifest proofs of this. *The every thing said in the text be infallibly true*, yet the Reader may be, nay, cannot chuse but be very fallible in the understanding of it."

Locke's Essay, b. 3. c. 9. s. 23.

Still fuller the author of the Illustration of the Holy Scriptures:—"As for the creation of the world, though questionless it was revealed to Adam, and so passed over to his posterity, by teachings and traditions from father to son, yet *without doubt* Moses had thereof, a new, full, and most certain knowledge by divine revelation, and infallible inspiration of the Holy Ghost." The Argument.

But whatever Dr. Priestley may say to the contrary, and howsoever he may depreciate the cosmogony of this great man, whom he has the assurance to represent as contradicting himself; ² he cannot convict the famous epochs of the creation, of the flood, and of division of languages, of falsehood, seeing they agree with every thing that is certain and likely in all other histories. Hence it is evident, that Moses' memoirs were of divine original, and that he was directed by the Spirit of the Creator, to be able to determine so precisely the time of the creation.

Indeed, upon the whole, the Doctor's observations on the inspiration of Moses are very weak, trifling, and unworthy of a man of his reputation in the philosophical world. If they were just, yet they are trifling, and would be of no benefit to mankind. But, as they are far otherwise, they are only calculated to mislead and unsettle the minds of the superficial and unwary. They are old deistical objections modernized and new vamped, which can have little or no weight with religious characters. Men of sober minds, cool heads, and solid attainments, easily see through them.

Let

² "Lame as I think I have shewn the cosmogony of Moses to be, and contradicted by facts recorded by himself." Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 37.

¹ "If there had been any thing repugnant to common reason in the history of the creation, the fall of man, the universal deluge, the propagation of the world by the sons of Noah, the history of the Patriarchs, had not Moses rational faculties as well as we ?

Let the pious Reader, who has a true concern for the honour of Moses* and holy scripture consult the following passages of the bible. They are plain,

D

full

" Nay, had he them not far better improved than any of ours are?"

Bishop Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*, book 2. chap. 2.

If the Reader wishes to see the account of the creation fully vindicated against the futile objections of Dr. Priestley, and other cavillers, let him consult this very learned and able work.—He will find much entertainment and satisfaction also on the same subject in Delan's *Revelation Examined with Candour*.—Berington's *Dissertations on the Mosaical Creation* may be read with advantage.—Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, on the first chapter of Genesis, will afford some light.—For the universality of the deluge, among other authors, see Bishop Watson's *Discourse to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Ely*, from whence it appears, that the tradition of an universal deluge is common in most of the Eastern countries. In the same *Discourse* this learned and liberal minded Prelate observes, that " Philosophers have some difficulty in reconciling natural appearances with the Mosaic relation of the creation and the deluge, but the history of the human race in every part of the globe confirms them both." Page 222.

" It cannot be denied, that Sir Isaac Newton had read and thought much upon the subject, and that the result of his inquiry was a perfect contempt of all the rivals of Moses. And the same may be said of Locke, Boyle, Bacon, and other famous Laymen."

See Bishop Berkley's *Minute Philosopher*, vol. 2. p. 87.

" Moses, the most ancient, is the most perfect of historians."

Apthorp's *Letters on the Prevalence of Christianity*, p. 24.

Solomon lived four or five hundred years after Moses. In the thirtieth chapter of his book of Proverbs we have Agur's confession of faith respecting the sacred writings then in being—*Every word of God, says he, is pure*. The five books of Moses were certainly written at that time, and were considered as the standard of the Jewish faith. When therefore Agur says, that *every word of God is pure*, it seems probable he meant, that every part of the writings of the Jewish lawgiver was free from the least alloy of error and depravity.

St. Peter, when the Jewish canon was complete, has a declaration of the same import with this of Agur: *As new born babes, says he, desire the sincere milk of the word: the sincere, unadulterated, and pure word, without any mixture of error, or any tincture of falsehood and folly*.—How different is this account of Agur and Peter, to that which Dr. Priestley would palm upon the world?

full and satisfactory, for the inspiration of the Old Testament, at least, and particularly for the inspiration of the five books of Moses. Nor does there appear the smallest intimation of any part of it not being authentic, or of inferior authority. If they mean any thing less than general inspiration and infallibility, all human language is delusive, and the bible calculated only to mislead and deceive:—Exod. 17. 14.—Ibid. 24. 4.—Ibid. 34. 27.—Numbers 32. 2.—Deut. 17. 18, 19.—Ibid. 31. 9—13.—Ibid. 31. 24—26.—Jof. 1. 7, 8.—Ibid. 8. 30—35.—1 Kings 2. 3.—2 Kings 21. 8.—2 Chron. 23. 18.—Ibid. 33. 8.—Ps. 19. 7—11.—Ibid. 119, throughout.—Ez. 11. 5.—Mal. 4. 4.—Mat. 4. 4, 7, 10.—Ibid. 5. 17, 18.—Ibid. 21. 42.—Ibid. 22. 29, 31, 43.—Ibid. 24. 15.—Ibid. 26. 54, 56.—Mark 12. 24, 26.—Luke 1, 67, 69, 70.—Ibid. 10. 26, 27.—Ibid. 16. 31.—Ibid. 24. 25, 27, 44.—John 1. 17, 45.—Ibid. 5. 39, 46, 47.—Ibid. 10. 35.—Acts 1. 16.—Ibid. 2. 16, 25—35.—Ibid. 3. 22, 24.—Ibid. 4. 25.—Ibid. 7. 1, 38.—Ibid. 15. 21.—Ibid. 17. 11.—Ibid. 18, 24, 28.—Ibid. 24. 14.—Ibid. 28. 25.—Rom. 2. 16.—Ibid. 3. 2. 10.—Ibid. 9. 25, 27, 29.—Ibid. 10. 5. 11, 16.—Ibid. 15. 4.—Ibid. 16. 26.—1 Cor. 2. 7.—Ibid. 10. 11, 13.—Ibid. 14. 37.—2 Cor. 3. 15.—Ibid. 4. 13.—Ibid. 6. 16, 17.—Gal. 3. 8.—Ep. 3. 3, 5.—Col. 3. 16.—1 Thes. 2. 13.—Ibid. 4. 15.—1 Tim. 5. 18.—2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.—Heb. 1. 1, 5—13.

5. 13. — Ibid. 3. 7. — Ibid. 5. 12. — Jas. 2. 8. —
 — Ibid. 4. 5. 6. — 1. Pet. 1. 10, 12. — Ibid. 4. 11. — 2. Pet. 1. 19. — 2. Tim. 4. 6. —

Notwithstanding the above degrading idea which the learned gentleman would give us of the writings of Moses, yet he professes to “believe in the perpetual obligation of all the laws which Moses prescribed to the Jews; and that circumcision, and other customs derived from their ancestors, were intended to distinguish them from all other nations, as the peculiar people of God to the end of the world.”

Nay, he has lately discovered, that “Jesus the son of Joseph and Mary, was only a suffering Messiah; but that another Messiah will certainly come, who shall be the prince of the house of David, under whom the Jews are to enjoy the great prosperity that is promised to them in the latter days.”

The same sentiment is repeated in another part of the Doctor's writings: — “I have no doubt,” says he, “but that a distinguished state of happiness and glory is reserved for them, and that it will
 D. 2. continue

Letters to the Jews, p. 5. and 54.

Ibid. p. 39 and 40. — James Edward Hamilton, Esq. has lately published his “*Strictures upon Primitive Christianity*.” He professes himself an Ebionite; rejects the whole of the New Testament, except the gospel by St. Mark; and considers the laws of Moses and the character of Jesus much in the same light as Dr. Priestley does in the above two passages.

"continue without interruption to the end of time."²

It may be observed upon this *Jewish* declaration, that it sometimes happens, where the Doctor ought to doubt, he has no doubt at all, and where he ought to be positive and determined, he abounds in doubts and negations.

SECTION V.

A GAIN:—"All the psalms, without exception, appear to me to be such poetical compositions, as intelligent and pious men may well be supposed to have made, *without any supernatural assistance.*"

This is another bold and hasty assertion, directly contrary to the most clear and positive evidence, as well as a variety of internal characters of inspiration.

Dr. Priestley seems to rest the fact of an author's inspiration pretty much upon his *declaring* himself inspired.³ If this be a just criterion of judging, then the writings of David will all come under the description of inspired. For he declared in the most general

²Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 120.—In opposition to all that Dr. Priestley and the modern Jews tell us about another Messiah to come, who is to be triumphant and victorious, Dean Prideaux, that sound scholar and judicious critic says:—"All that they tell us of their twofold Messiah, is a mere fiction framed without as much as a pretence to any foundation in scripture for it; a vile and most pitiful fetch, invented only to evade what they cannot answer; and their being forced to have recourse to such a wretched shift, is a plain giving up of the cause they make use of it for." Connection, part 2. b. 8. p. 382.

³Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 98.—⁴Ibid. p. 97 and 98.

general and unqualified terms, a little before his dissolution; that *the Spirit of the Lord spake by him; and his word was in his tongue.*

Besides this general declaration of the sweet Psalmist of Israel concerning his own inspiration, two of the most celebrated of the New Testament writers have expressly declared, when speaking of the divine oracles, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God;* and that *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* These two passages apply to every page of those writings, which, in the time of our Saviour, came under the description of *the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms.*

D 3

Moreover,

¹2 Sam. 23. 2.—Bp. Patrick observes upon this verse, that “David would not have those hymns, nor what he spake now, looked upon as human compositions; but as proceeding from a divine influence, conferred upon him by the Holy Ghost.”

²Bishop Chandler observes upon the last words of David: “1. That David was a prophet, and spake his psalms by the Spirit of God.

“2. That he spoke in his psalms concerning the Messiah, under his own person.—When he sings of his sufferings, his enemies, his success, his exaltation, and the like, he meant these things not so much of himself, as of the Messiah.” Defence of Christianity, p. 237.

³2 Tim. 3. 15.—⁴2 Pet. 1. 21.

⁵Luke 24. 44.—“As for the penmen of the Old Testament,” says Tillotson, “we are assured that they were all inspired, by one in the New Testament, that was unquestionably so; St. Paul, who tells us, that *all scripture is given by divine inspiration*, meaning the books of the Old Testament which were called by that name by way of eminency.” Sermon 222.

See also an excellent sermon on 2 Tim. 3. 16, in the 8th vol. of Clarke, where he treats the inspiration of the Old Testament as a thing not to be questioned.

Socinus too, in his book entitled, “An Argument for the Authority of the Holy Scriptures,” insists largely on the truth of the writings of the Old Testament from the attestations of our Saviour and his Apostles in the New.—See that valuable work, passim.

Moreover, howsoever it may be with the book of psalms in general, it is certain, that the second, sixty-ninth, ninety-fifth, hundred and ninth, and hundred and tenth, are all expressly said, in the New Testament, to have been written by the direction and assistance of God and his Holy Spirit.

Thus, when the Apostles were persecuted by the rulers of the Jews, they applied the two first verses of the second psalm to their own situation at that time, and say, not that it was David who was the original and proper author of the composition, but that it was God who spake by the mouth of David: --- *And when they (the Apostles) heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the Heavens rage, and the people imagine vain things? And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Here it will be observed, that the whole company of the disciples apply these words of the second psalm to their own situation---they declare them to be, not the words of David, but of God---they were, at the time of making this application, under the influence of the Holy Ghost---it follows, therefore, that David was directed and assisted by God, when he composed this prophetic psalm, in a supernatural manner.

St,

Acts 4. 24, 25, 31.

*** This second psalm we Christians interpret to be a prophecy of the Messiah, and hold it to be all fulfilled in our Saviour, and the

St. Peter, quoting two passages from the psalms, the former from the 69th. and the latter from the 109th. expressly tells us, that the Holy Ghost spake them by the mouth of David.*

The 95th. psalm says, *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.* This passage is quoted by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews and is declared to have been written by the Holy Ghost:---*Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*†

The 110th. psalm, our Saviour tells us, was written by the assistance of the Spirit. *What think ye of Christ?* said he to the Pharisees: *Whose son is he?* They say unto him, *The Son of David.* He saith unto them, *How then doth David in Spirit call*

“erection of his kingdom, against all opposition, which it met with
“from Jews, Heathens, and the Princes, and Rulers of the earth.
“And so the holy Apostles understood it of old, Acts 4. 25—27.
“and chap. 13. 33. Heb. 1. 5. In opposition hereto, the Jews
“apply it wholly and solely to David himself, and will allow it no
“other meaning either literal or typical, but what is terminated in
“his person. But the Targum is on our side, for it interprets this
“psalm to be a prophecy of the Messiah, as all Christians do.”

Prideaux's Connection, p. 2. b. 8. p. 583.

Dr. Priestley, however, though called a Christian, interprets it wholly of David, and will not allow it to have the smallest reference to our blessed Saviour in the manner the modern Jews now do, and in opposition both to the ancient Jews, the Apostles of Christ, and the whole Christian world. I condemn not the Doctor for thinking for himself; but I must say he is much to be blamed for opposing the authority of the Apostles of our Lord. Their clear and decided opinions ought to be final, and absolutely binding upon every believer in Christ Jesus.

See Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 98—103.

See Acts 1. 16, 30.—See Heb. 3. 7. 8.

call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"

The sum of these observations on the inspiration of the book of psalms is this :---1. David himself professed, near the time of his dissolution, to have written by the Spirit of the Lord.

2. St. Peter, when speaking of the Old Testament, says, *Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

3. St. Paul assures us, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God.*

4. Five of the psalms, namely, the 2d. 69th. 95th. 109th. and 110th. are particularly said, by the highest authority, to have been written by supernatural assistance. With what assurance then can Dr. Priestley say, that "all the psalms, without exception, appear to me to be such poetical compositions, as intelligent and pious men may well be supposed to have made, without any supernatural assistance?" But,

Again :

"Mat. 22. 42—44. St. Mark expresses this more clearly:—How say the Scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said unto my Lord, &c. Mark 12. 36.

Dr. Doddridge observes on this passage—"Our Lord, we see, always takes it for granted in his arguments with the Jews, that the Writers of the Old Testament were under such an extraordinary guidance of the Holy Spirit, as to express themselves with the strictest propriety on all occasions. And I look on this as no contemptible argument for the inspiration of the New Testament; for we can never think the Apostles of Christ to have been less assisted by the Divine Spirit in their writings, when they were in other respects so much more powerfully endowed with it.

Again:---“ All the allusions in them (the psalms) “ are to transactions prior to the time in which they “ were composed, without the least reference to any “ thing that passed in after ages.”

This is another of the Doctor's unfounded assertions, contrary to the most indisputable matter of fact, and, as was observed above, in direct opposition to the internal evidence of several of the psalms themselves. This will appear, if I mistake not, by an induction of particulars, to the full satisfaction of every impartial enquirer after truth.

1. Our Saviour himself assured his disciples, even after his resurrection from the dead, and just before his final ascent into heaven, that *all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him.*^{*} This could not have been the case, if the Psalms contained no predictions concerning Christ.

2. The 16th. psalm is applied to our blessed Saviour by an authority that cannot be questioned, and in a manner that cannot be misunderstood. For St. Peter, *being full of the Holy Ghost*, addressed the men of Israel in the words following:---*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have cruci-
fied*

^{*}Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 98.—^{*}Luke 24. 44.

sied and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried; and his sepulchre is with us unto this day: therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ, to sit on his throne: he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Here we see, that David was a prophet---that he spake concerning Christ---that he foresaw his resurrection, and prophesied concerning it---and that the Apostle applied these words of the 16th. psalm to that glorious event.

3. The 22d. psalm is applied, upon a variety of occasions, to our blessed Saviour in the New Testament. I shall however notice only one single passage:

sage:—*They pierced my hands and my feet: I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garment among them; and cast lots upon my vesture.*² St. John applies the words to Christ in this manner:—*Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.*³

If the Doctor should say, this is only an application, and not a fulfilment, of the words of the psalm, it will be incumbent on him to declare what prior event of David's life and experience he alludes to in these declarations. If he cannot point out any particular transaction of his private or public life, to which they do apply, then he must excuse us if we consider the above declaration as absolutely erroneous, and the words of the psalm as a real prophecy, and as justly applied by St. John to the only transaction to which, perhaps, they ever were applicable, since the beginning of the world, the crucifixion and death of God's own dear and only-begotten Son. And, if this is just, here is a direct prophecy by David of our blessed Saviour, and such an one, as he could not have come to the knowledge of by any common and natural means whatever.

4. The

²Ps. 22. 16—18.—³John 19. 23, 24.

4. The 40th. psalm is of like nature, for a part of it is applied to our great High-priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Apostle of the Gentiles:---

*Many, O my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I should declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.**

This remarkable passage of the psalm is applied, in the manner following, by the great Apostle before mentioned, which application I will give in the excellent Dr. Doddridge's paraphrastic translation:---"*But in them* (the Jewish sacrifices)

"*there is* of course, as it were, a yearly commemora-

"*tion of sins*, by a yearly presentation of the atoning

"*blood of new sacrifices* in the most holy place:

"*which shews*, that their efficacy is so far from ex-

"*tending*, as that of the true expiation does, to all

"*nations, times, and places*, that it only looks back

"*upon the year compleated*, and hath no influence,

"*even with regard to those persons* who are actu-

"*ally present in the temple*, on any thing future.

"*And indeed the reason of this is plain; for (it*

"*is) in the nature of things, impossible that the blood*

of

" bulls and of goats, should, on the whole, take away
 " sins, or make a real atonement to God as the
 " great Governour of the world, for the moral
 " guilt of any transgression; though it may by di-
 " vine appointment put a stop to any farther prose-
 " cution which might proceed in Jewish courts, or
 " any such extraordinary judgment, as the peculiar
 " state of things among that people might other-
 " wise require. Therefore when the Messiah is de-
 " scribed in David, as making his entrance into the
 " world, he saith, in those well-known words, *Sacri-
 " fice and offering thou wouldst not (accept) but a bo-
 " dy thou hast provided me, in which I may render
 " thee a more acceptable service: in whole burnt-
 " offerings thou hadst no complacency, when consider-
 " ed in this view, and in reference to this great
 " event. Then I said, with the most chearful con-
 " sent: Behold, I come; in the volume of the book, which
 " contains the ancient prophecies, it is written of me,
 " that I should accomplish this service, and I de-
 " light to do thy will, O my God; for thy law in all its
 " branches is within my heart. Having in effect
 " said above, As for sacrifice and offering, whether
 " they were burnt-offerings or sacrifices for sin, thou
 " didst not desire (them) or take pleasure in them,
 " which comprehends the most material and consi-
 " derable of those things which were offered to God
 " under the Law; then he said, Behold, I come to do
 " thy will, O God. So that you see, he taketh away
 " the first, that is, burnt-offerings and sacrifices, that
 " he*

“ he may establish the second, that is, doing God’s
 “ will; pointing therein to that great act of obedi-
 “ ence, by which the pardon of sin was to be secu-
 “ red, and the divine honour most effectually pro-
 “ moted. In the execution of which will, we
 “ are sanctified, cleansed from our sins, and recom-
 “ mended to the divine acceptance, even by the
 “ offering up the body of our Lord Jesus Christ once
 “ for all, as an atoning sacrifice.”

These remarkable verses of the psalm thus ap-
 plied by the Apostle, represent David as discovering
 the inefficacy of the common Mosaical sacrifices, and
 foreseeing the advent of Jesus Christ in human form,
 to make atonement for the sins of the world by the
 sacrifice of himself: Consequently “ all the allusions
 “ in the psalms are not to transactions prior to the
 “ time in which they were composed;” nor is it
 true that “ they are without the least reference to
 “ any thing that passed in after ages.”

5. Is not the 72d. psalm^o also a direct prophecy
 of

^oHeb. 10. 3—10.

“ This psalm the modern Jews interpret of Solomon, but
 “ Christians understand it as a prophecy of the Messiah: and the
 “ Targum is on our side herein; for it applies it to the Messiah
 “ in the same manner as we do.”

Prideaux’s Connection, p. 2. b. 8. p. 583.

Bishop Warburton justly observes, that “ the general body of the
 “ Prophecies which relate to Jesus, were, for certain great ends of
 “ Providence, so contrived as to have a *primary* accomplishment
 “ in the events of the Mosaic dispensation, and a *secondary* and final
 “ completion in the birth and ministry and sufferings of Jesus the
 “ Messiah.” Doctrine of Grace, p. 233.

See this doctrine of a secondary completion of the prophecies
 ably defended in the Divine Legation of Moses, b. 6. c. 5, 6.

Consult likewise the second of bishop Hurd’s Discourses on the
 Prophecies.

of some great and unparalleled king, who should arise after the time of David? Let the serious Reader peruse the psalm, and say whether all the expressions in it are applicable to king Solomon, or any other king that ever sat upon the throne of Israel. If there are expressions in it which never could be applied to any other than the Messiah, then Dr. Priestley's assertion, that "all the allusions in the psalms" "are to transactions prior to the time in which" "they were composed, without the least reference" "to any thing that passed in after ages," is without any foundation in truth, and it must appear to every sober-minded person, that his most confident declarations are not always to be depended upon.

6. The 110th. psalm is expressly applied (we have seen before that it was written by the Spirit) to the Messiah, both by our Saviour himself, and by St. Paul. But the Doctor can easily get over these, and a thousand such difficulties; for it is only saying, that "Christ was a mere man like ourselves;" "the son of Joseph and Mary; capable of misapplying the scriptures of the Old Testament; naturally fallible, peccable, weak like other men; liable to sin, as well as subject to error; that St. Paul reasons inconclusively; and that the Apostles often applied the scriptures very improperly;" and the business is done. He makes no account of such applications, but is persuaded that "David did not" "know any thing about the Messiah, personally" "con-

“ considered ;” and that “ we are much better situated for taking an enlarged and just view of the subject in all its connexions,”⁷ than the Apostles were. I should suppose, however, that Christ, *in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, was as well circumstanced, at least, “ for taking an enlarged and just view of the subject in all its connexions,” as Dr. Priestley ; and that even the Apostles, who were filled with the Holy Ghost, that was promised to lead them into all the truth of the gospel covenant, were not one jot behind the very wisest of the sons of men in evangelical knowledge, and clearness of conceptions. When therefore they indisputably apply this psalm to the Messiah and the circumstances attending his mediation, I am of opinion we ought most implicitly to give them credit, even though we should have the misfortune to differ ever so widely from Dr. Priestley and his Socinian brethren. Indeed I cannot help saying, that the whole of the Doctor’s criticism upon this psalm is a very weak attempt to evade the force of a plain and important passage of the prophetic scriptures.⁸ And I appeal to any man of candour, who will be at the pains to read it, whether (if such miserable conjectures, amendments, provisos, suppositions, and the like,

⁷Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 105.

⁸Ibid. vol. 4. p. 113.

⁹See ditto. vol. 4. p. 103—113.

like, are admissible in our interpretations of holy scripture) there is not an end of all precision and certainty on religious subjects; and whether the bible, instead of being a *light to our feet and a lamp to our paths*, does not become the most vague and fallacious book that ever was imposed upon the world.

From all these considerations taken together, it follows, as clearly, in my judgment, as any thing well can do from scriptural evidence, that David wrote his psalms by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost—that several of them refer to various events which took place in after ages—and that Dr. Priestley was never more mistaken than when he said, “All the psalms, without exception, appear to me “to be such poetical compositions as intelligent and “pious men may well be supposed to have made, “without any supernatural assistance; and that all “the allusions in them are to transactions prior to “the time in which they were composed, without “the least reference to any thing that passed in after ages.”—Let the Reader judge. I cheerfully submit the decision of the question to his determination.

E

Again:—

“How much more just is the view which Bishop Horne hath given us of the book of psalms? “The Psalms,” says he, “are “an epitome of the bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. “They treat occasionally of the creation and formation of the “world; the dispensations of providence, and the œconomy of “grace; the transactions of the patriarchs; the exodus of the “children of Israel; their journey through the wilderness, and “settlement in Canaan; their law, priesthood, and ritual; the ex-

Again:—"It is by no means probable that Solomon wrote any thing by inspiration."

So says Dr. Priestley: but a greater than he hath said, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God*; and, in the opinion of most men, the assertion of St. Paul, where it is plain and positive, is at any time preferable to the sophistical reasonings of Dr. Priestley: for, whatever other excellencies that learned gentleman may possess, I do maintain, that he is one of the most fallacious theological writers of the present day. His abilities are very considerable; so were Voltaire's; and, I cheerfully acknowledge, I am much entertained with reading various parts of their works; but I would always be upon the utmost guard against both one and the other, on subjects where their minds are biaſſed in favour of any particular nostrums on political or religious subjects. The Reader will see farther the necessity of caution in the perusal of their writings in the course of these strictures.

Again:—

"ploits of their great men, wrought through faith; their sins and captivities; their repentances and restorations; the sufferings and victories of David; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon; the advent of Messiah, with its effects and consequences; his incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and priesthood; the effusion of the Spirit; the conversion of the nations; the rejection of the Jews; the establishment, increase, and perpetuity, of the Christian church; the end of the world; the general judgement; the condemnation of the wicked; and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King."

Commentary on the Psalms, pref. p. 1.

2 Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 97.—3 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Again:—"As the ancient Israelites, and, as far as appears, even the Prophets also, were left to themselves with respect to the interpretation of prophecy, *and they accordingly fell into great mistakes*; it is natural to expect, that the Christian prophets, as the Apostles may be called, should likewise be left to themselves in the same respects, *and that they should fall into like mistakes*. From this analogy we may conclude, that they would have knowledge enough for their mission, but not more."

The Prophets were enlightened to predict future events, to explain and inculcate the law of Moses, and to reprove the people for their deviations from it. This was their proper office. And this they

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executed

³Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 121.—"The object of their mission required, that the first preachers of Christianity should be infallible, in whatever opinions they maintained either about the nature of God, or the principles of his moral government; in whatever they taught concerning the terms, or the means, of man's acceptance and salvation, and in the facts which they have related of the Redeemer's life. If in these things they were not infallible; if any appeal lies from their assertions, to any man's private opinions; who shall draw the line, where the truth of their preaching ends, and their error commences? If their inspiration was complete upon these subjects; it was, to all intents and purposes, *plenary*. If it gave them no light about the true system of the world, the circulation of the blood, or the properties of the Leyden Phial; it was not upon that account defective, as a religious inspiration. The distinction therefore between a plenary inspiration, and an inspiration extending only to cases in which the object of their mission required it, is vain and imaginary: and it is a mere pretence to profess a belief in the one, when the other is openly denied."

Horsley's Tracts, p. 407, 408.

executed with great fidelity and zeal. Nor does it appear that they ever committed any error, in their prophetic capacity, as Dr. Priestley seems to suppose. In all other respects they were mere men, and liable to the mistakes to which other men are liable. The Apostles, in like manner, were inspired for a particular purpose. That inspiration, so far as it extended, was infallible. They were guided into all truth which concerned their office. Nor does it appear, that they ever committed the smallest error in their predictions of future events, or in their applications of Old Testament writings to the state of things under the New Testament dispensation. In every other respect, like the Prophets who preceded them, they were, like all other men, weak, fallible, and liable to mistakes of every description.

SECTION VI.

THIS same gentleman treats the New Testament no better than the Old. The Prophets, he has just told us, *committed great mistakes*, the Apostles did the same. And moreover, “ I have frequently avowed myself,” says he again, “ not to be a believer in the inspiration of the Evangelists and Apostles, as writers: I therefore hold the subject of the miraculous conception to be one, with respect to which any person is fully at liber-

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“ty to think as the evidence shall appear to him.”
To this dangerous assertion I reply in the words of the very learned Dr. Jortin:—“How far, and in what degree, the Apostles were inspired, is not easy to determine, nor consequently necessary to be known. Thus much we may affirm, that they were assisted of God to give us a faithful account of the things which we ought to believe, and to perform, that we may attain eternal life.

“For, first, the Apostles had a promise of divine assistance upon certain occasions. *When they deliver you up, says Christ, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* Whence we may reason thus—If the Apostles were to receive from the Holy Ghost a skill to speak what

E 3

“was

“Letters to Dr. Horsley, part 1. p. 132.—“When the inspiration of the sacred writers is once deemed partial, it is easy to elude the force of any portion, or passage, which a fanciful critic may deem absurd or ill founded.”

Croft's Sermons, p. 40.

“Nothing can be more evident, says the pious and learned Doddridge, than that a firm and cordial belief of the inspiration of the sacred scripture is of the highest moment, not only to the edification and peace of the church, but in a great measure to its very existence. For if this be given up, the authority of the revelation is enervated and its use destroyed. The star which is to direct our course is clouded; our compass is broke to pieces, and we are left to make the voyage of life in sad uncertainty, amidst a thousand rocks, and shelves, and quicksands.”

See Doddridge's Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament, in the Family Expositor, vol. 3. p. 37. Appendix.

See also the 7th. of Mr. Kett's late excellent Sermons at the Bampton Lecture for a good account of the Inspiration of holy scripture

“ was proper when they appeared in public to defend
“ Christianity, we may suppose that they were guided by the same Spirit in their writings; because
“ this was of greater importance, and more worthy
“ of the Divine interposition. By speaking justly
“ they might confute some adversaries, preserve
“ themselves and their religion from the contempt
“ of their hearers, and convert and confirm that
“ part of the assembly which had good dispositions;
“ whereas their writings were designed for the service, not of four or five hundred men, but of all
“ ages and nations.

“ Secondly, Our Saviour promised his Apostles
“ that the Holy Ghost should continually abide with
“ them—that he should lead them into all truth—
“ and that in particular he should bring to their
“ remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto
“ them; which will appear to have been necessary,
“ if we consider that the gospels consist in a great
“ measure of the discourses of Christ—that Christ
“ conversed with them at least for three years—that
“ they had at that time very imperfect notions of the
“ religion which he came to teach, and of the office
“ to which they should be appointed—and that in
“ all probability they had not collected materials for
“ the gospels, or set down his discourses, whilst he
“ was with them.

“ Thirdly, Our Lord told his disciples that they
“ were not then disposed to receive and understand
“ some

“ some truths which the Holy Ghost should afterwards reveal to them; and the Apostles have taught us some things which are not to be found in the gospels, or are not clearly delivered there, as, the design and the abolishment of the ceremonial law, certain relative duties, and some particulars concerning the worship of God and the regulation of Christian societies or churches.

“ It is therefore a *vain* distinction which some have attempted to make between the precepts or doctrines of Christ and those of the Apostles, as if less regard were to be paid to the latter than the former. Our Saviour seems plainly to equal the Apostles to himself, as teachers, commands all men to receive them, to hear them, and to pay the same deference to them as to him.

“ Lastly, The Apostles upon several occasions affirm that they had an extraordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost; they declare that they had received their doctrines, not from men, but from Jesus Christ; and that every one who pretended to inspiration must acknowledge this, or ought to pass for an impostor, if he owned it not. They say that they had the mind of Christ; they call their doctrine the word of God and of Christ, the commandment of God and of the Lord, the wisdom of God, the wisdom which God had revealed to them by his Spirit, and words which the Holy Ghost had taught them, the testimony of God,

“ the gospel of God by which men should be
 “ judged: they assert that they are of God, that he
 “ who knoweth God heareth them, and that he who
 “ heareth them not is not of God.”¹—

Again:—As our blessed Saviour was no other than a mere man, and a suffering Messiah, so his sufferings, we are told by the same authority, were of no more efficacy than the sufferings of any other good man. For, “ the circumstantial account,” says he, “ of
 “ the sufferings and death of Christ, in the 53 chapter of Isaiah, might have been the description of
 “ any other good man in the same situation, with
 “ this only difference, that the moral effects of it
 “ are represented to be more extensive.”²

And again, to the same purpose:—“ Christ being
 “ a man, who suffered and died in the best of causes,
 “ there is nothing so very different in the occasion
 “ or manner of his death, from that of others who
 “ suffered and died after him in the cause of Christianity, but that their sufferings and deaths may be
 “ considered in the same light with his.”³

These two assertions are extremely erroneous, and subversive of the great design of the Divine Being in reconciling the world unto himself by the death

¹Discourses on the Truth of the Christian Religion, p 212—216.

²Theological Repository, vol. 1. p. 129.

³Ibid. p. 39.—N. B. Though Dr. Priestley is the Editor of this work, I cannot positively say whether he is the author of these two assertions.

death of his Son. How much more justly does Lord Bacon speak, when he says, "Jesus, the Lord, became in the flesh a sacrificer, and sacrifice for sin; a satisfaction and price to the justice of God; a meriter of glory and the kingdom.—The sufferings and merits of Christ are sufficient to do away the sins of the whole world."

Can the same be said of the sufferings of any mere man?

The celebrated Dr. Blair also, when speaking of our Saviour's dying hour, says, "This was the hour in which Christ atoned for the sins of mankind, and accomplished our eternal redemption. It was the hour when that great sacrifice was offered up, the efficacy of which reaches back to the first transgression of man, and extends forward to the end of time; the hour when, from the cross, as from an high altar, the blood was flowing, which washed away the guilt of the nations.

"This awful dispensation of the Almighty contains mysteries which are beyond the discovery of man. It is one of those things into which the angels desire to look. What has been revealed to us, is, That the death of Christ was the interposition of heaven for preventing the ruin of human kind. We know, that under the government of God, misery is the natural consequence
" of

“ of guilt. After rational creatures had, by their
 “ criminal conduct, introduced disorder into the Di-
 “ vine kingdom, there was no ground to believe,
 “ that by their penitence and prayers alone they
 “ could prevent the destruction which threatened
 “ them. The prevalence of propitiatory sacrifi-
 “ ces throughout the earth, proclaims it to be the
 “ general sense of mankind, that mere repentance
 “ was not of sufficient avail to expiate sin, or to
 “ stop its penal effects. By the constant allusions
 “ which are carried on in the New Testament to
 “ the sacrifices under the Law, as pre-signifying a
 “ great atonement made by Christ; and by the
 “ strong expressions which are used in describing
 “ the effects of his death, the sacred writers shew,
 “ as plainly as language allows, that there was an
 “ efficacy in his sufferings, far beyond that of mere
 “ example and instruction.”—

Again:—“ So strange and incredible does your
 “ hypothesis

“ Sermons, vol. 1. p. 121, 122.—The Reader will be much
 edified by consulting the whole of this very excellent sermon. In-
 deed all Blair's Sermons are peculiarly elegant and instructive.
 One cannot help wishing they were in the hand of every man of
 an improved mind.—In answer to all that Dr. Priestley says against
 the atonement for sin made by the death of Christ see also Ber-
 ry-Street Sermons, p. 263—276.—Consult likewise Archbishop
 Tillotson's 47th. and 228th. Sermons—Bishop Browne's Sermons,
 the whole first volume—Bishop Conybeare's 4th. Sermon, entitled,
 “ The Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction agreeable with Reason”—
 and Bishop Butler's Analogy, part 2. chap. 5.—Dr. Priestley may
 cavil with such Authors, as indeed he does with every one who
 maintains the proper dignity of Christ, but he can no more *solidly*
 answer them than he can change the nature of truth itself.

" hypothesis (the pre-existence of Christ) appear to
 " me, that rather than admit it, I would suppose
 " the whole verse (John 6. 32. *What and if ye*
 " *shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was be-*
 " *fore?*) to be an interpolation, or that the *old Apostle*
 " dictated one thing, and his amanuensis wrote
 " another."

Serious Reader! I appeal to thy judgment:
 What could that arch-infidel Voltaire have said
 more sneeringly, to degrade the word of God, and
 to render it contemptible in the eyes of the nations,
 than is here asserted by this sophistical Divine?
 What authority, or what appearance of authority,
 has he for so disingenuous an insinuation? Surely the
 cause of Socinianism is desperate, if it needs arts like
 these for its support.

Again:—

" Letters to Dr. Price, p. 58, in his Defences of Unitarianism
 for the year 1787—Dr. Whitby observes, when speaking of slips
 and mistakes—" I can by no means grant any slips of memory in
 " the Compilers of these sacred books of the New Testament; for
 " though these are allowed by some in matters of small consequence,
 " as they are pleased to stile them: yet is it of great consequence
 " that we do not own them: for, if you grant that they have
 " thus slipt at all, by what rules can we be assured they have not
 " slipt above an hundred times, or even in most of their historical
 " relations?—If one of those sacred writers might be subject to
 " these slips, why not all? If once, why not often? And can we
 " think it no prejudice to the divine authority of these sacred
 " writings, that they should so often be subject to false
 " citations, and produce false stories, contradicting the truth
 " of the Old Testament? Would not this yield a great advantage
 " against our rule of faith, both to the unbelieving Jews, and to the
 " Sceptics, and Antiscripturists, which too much abound among
 " us?"

General Preface concerning the Divine authority of the scrip-
 tures of the New Testament, p. 6. which the Reader would do
 well to consult in defence of the inspiration of those inestimable
 writings.

Again:—"As it is not pretended, that there are
 " any miracles adapted to prove that Christ made
 " and supports the world, I do not see, that we are
 " under any obligation to believe it, *merely because*
 " *it was an opinion held by an Apostle.*"

If the word of God plainly informs us, that Christ created and supports the universe, we can have no higher and better authority. Thus saith St. John, and thus saith St. Paul, are the best authority in the world. And serious men will infinitely sooner give credit to their simple declarations, than to all the flimsy arguments of Dr. Priestley.

I will add here an objection to the inspiration of the New Testament, and the answer given by the learned Michaelis:—"It has been objected," says this very able Scholar, "that though the doctrines
 " are divine, it does not follow, that the writings of
 " the Apostles and Evangelists are so; that these
 " no where pretend to a divine inspiration, which
 " they ought, if we are bound to receive them as
 " divine."

"I might answer to this," says he, "that the
 " Prophets promised a more perfect revelation of the
 " will of God under the New Testament, than that
 " under the Old, and that therefore it may be presum-
 " ed some new inspired writings were necessary; that
 " the

*History of Early Opinions, vol. i. p. 63.—See an able defence of the Apostles and their writings in Dr. Whitby's General Preface concerning the divine authority of the Epistles of the N. T. in the beginning of his Commentary.

“ the doctrine of the gospel supercedes the law of
“ Moses, which being contained and delivered in
“ inspired writings, couldnot be abolished by writ-
“ tings uninspired; and that the words of the great
“ prophet Jesus Christ, which are so much more ex-
“ cellent than all the words delivered by all the Pro-
“ phets, were worthy to be recorded, in a manner the
“ most unexceptionably credible.

“ But the reflection which most satisfies me, is
“ this; most of the writers of the New Testament,
“ Matthew, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude,
“ were Apostles, that is, of the number of those to
“ whom Christ had, in the clearest manner, promised
“ a divine inspiration, merely as preachers of the gos-
“ pel, which was to extend, not to the matter only,
“ but even to the words. Mat. x. 19. Mark xiii. 11.
“ Luke xii. 11. xxi. 15. Now their writings, upon
“ which the church of Christ was to be built, being
“ of much more importance than their sermons, it is
“ highly probable that they were no less assisted by
“ the Holy Ghost in writing, than in speaking.

“ If, besides, we consider, that the Apostles prefer
“ themselves to the Prophets, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph.
“ iv. 11. and are justified in so doing by the declara-
“ tion of Christ, Mat. xi. 9—11. they seem in fact
“ to claim a divine inspiration, whenever they stile
“ themselves at the beginning of their epistles, an
“ Apostle of Jesus Christ, and thereby declare those
“ epistles to be authoritative. We may apply to them
“ what Aben-Ezra says of the man of God, in Deut.

“ xxxiii.

“ xxxiii. 1. He adds this, in order to shew that he
 “ blessed them as a Prophet.

“ But besides all this, it must be mentioned; that
 “ St. Paul in 1 Cor. ii. 10. 12. 13. 16. and Gal. 1.
 “ 12. doth expressly pretend to a divine inspira-
 “ tion.”³—

But to proceed with the Doctor:—“ It is not, cer-
 “ tainly, from a few casual expressions, which so easily
 “ admit of other interpretations, and especially in
 “ epistolary writings, that we can be authorised to
 “ infer, that such was the serious opinion of the A-
 “ postles. But if it had been their real opinion, it
 “ would not follow, that it was true, unless the
 “ teaching of it should appear to be included in their
 “ general commission, with which, as I have shewn,
 “ it has no sort of connection.”⁴

When by fair and candid interpretation we can
 clearly ascertain what were the real opinions of all,
 or even of any one of the Apostles, on subjects con-
 nected with the doctrine of salvation, sober men
 will not hesitate whether they should submit their
 understandings to such authority, or bewilder them-
 selves in the endless mazes of Dr. Priestley's volumi-
 nous and sophistical writings. No man living has
 a right to reject the opinions of the Apostles on any
 religious

³Introductory Lect. to the N. T. sect. 4.

⁴History of Early Opinions p. 70.—Bishop Watson observes, that
 “ the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament, are so in-
 “ timately united with the narration of common events, and the
 “ ordinary transactions of life, that you cannot, as in profane histo-
 “ ry, separate the one from the other.”

Apology for Christianity, p. 280.

religious subject whatever, until he can shew superior authority. Baron Swedenborg indeed has done it without any authority, but that of a disordered imagination. He has both added to and taken from the word of God. Dr. Priestley does the same, whenever the opinions of the sacred writers appear to oppose the system he has espoused. But modest men will be careful, lest they should transgress the solemn injunction of Moses—*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it*—and incur that fearful doom of another of the sacred books—*If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Again:—"I do not believe the miraculous conception of Jesus, but am of opinion, that he was the legitimate son of Joseph." Ignatius, however, the disciple of St. John, says, "that our God Jesus Christ, was, according to the dispensation of God, conceived in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, by the Holy Ghost."⁶

Dr. Priestley rejects wholly the two first chapters of St. Matthew's gospel, and the two first chapters of St. Luke's. All this, however, is done upon no good and respectable authority. To me it is almost demonstrably

⁶Letters to the Jews, p. 1. p. 41.—⁶Epist. to the Ep. sect. 18.

monstrably certain, that these four chapters made an original part of the two gospels in question, from this single circumstance, that one part of the ancient Ebionites believed the miraculous conception, though the other did not. Whence should their evidence for such an opinion arise, but from the four chapters in these two gospels? From this one circumstance, I say, it appears evident to me, that these chapters, objected to by Dr. Priestley, made an original part of the holy scriptures; and the above positive testimony of Ignatius is no small confirmation of this supposition.

The late Dr. Johnson used to say of Dr. Priestley's writings, and it should seem with great truth, that they were calculated to unsettle every thing, and to settle nothing. And even Mr. Gibbon, in his history, remarks, when speaking of the same writings, "that the pillars of revelation are shaken by those men, who preserve the name without the substance of religion, who indulge the licence without the temper of philosophy."

Again:—"I think it is hardly possible to read these passages (*quotations from several of the Fathers*) in which the inconveniences that would have attended the discovery of the miraculous conception are very strongly and naturally described, without feeling that the story itself is an
"incumbrance

“ *incumbrance on the Christian scheme*, and that it
 “ would at least have appeared to more advantage
 “ without it.”⁸

Mr. Veyfie observes upon this declaration of the
 learned Doctor—“ Whether the miraculous con-
 “ ception be an incumbrance on the Christian
 “ scheme, is another question: it is certainly a
 “ great incumbrance on the scheme of our modern
 “ Unitarians. For if, as they affirm, Christ was a
 “ mere man, naturally possessed of no other powers
 “ than other men have, what reason can possibly be
 “ assigned, why he should not have been conceived
 “ and born like other men? On the other hand, if
 “ we admit the doctrine in question, and allow that
 “ Christ was miraculously conceived, and born in
 “ an unusual manner, who is there, whom this cir-
 “ cumstance does not lead to suspect, I had almost
 “ said, does not persuade, that his nature must be
 “ superior to that of man? It is not therefore with-
 “ out reason, that the advocates of the simple huma-
 “ nity endeavour to remove from the Christian
 “ creed a doctrine so hostile to their principal posi-
 “ tion. In the mean while the orthodox believer
 “ is not displeased to find, that this bold measure is
 “ attempted by means, not likely to make many
 “ converts, viz. partly by asserting the fallibility of
 “ the holy Evangelists, who relate the fact; and

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“ partly

⁸History of Early Opinions, vol. 4. p. 50.

“ partly by denying the authenticity of the writings,
 “ which contain the relation.””

Again:—As to St. Luke’s account of the miraculous conception, “ I have shewn that it abounds
 “ with the most manifest improbabilities.”—Serious men will be at no loss to judge between St. Luke and Dr. Priestley. The arguments adduced against the eloquent Evangelist are mere sophistry, such as Dr. Priestley himself would thoroughly despise in an antagonist of his own.

The learned Bishop of St. David’s has an excellent sermon upon the miraculous conception, which should be read in answer to all these confident assertions of Dr. Priestley. I will lay before the Reader a short extract from it on the evidence of the doctrine. “ We have,” says his Lordship, “ for the
 “ miraculous conception the express testimony of
 “ two out of the four Evangelists: of St. Matthew, whose gospel was published in Judea with-
 “ in a few years after our Lord’s ascension; and of
 “ St. Luke, whose narrative was composed, as may
 “ be collected from the author’s short preface, to
 “ prevent the mischief that was to be apprehended
 “ from some pretended histories of our Saviour’s
 “ life, in which the truth was probably blended with
 “ many

¹Sermon, proving the Doctrine of St. John, and the Faith of the first Christians, not Unitarian, p. 4.

²Letters to the Jews, p. 2. p. 10.

“ many legendary tales. It is very remarkable,
“ that the fact of the miraculous conception should
“ be found in the first of the four gospels; written at
“ a time when many of the near relations of the ho-
“ ly family must have been living, by whom the
“ story, had it been false, had been easily confuted:
“ that it should be found again in St. Luke’s gospel;
“ written for the peculiar use of the converted Gen-
“ tiles, and for the express purpose of furnishing a
“ summary of authentic facts, and of suppressing
“ spurious narrations. Was it not ordered by some
“ peculiar providence of God, that the two great
“ branches of the primitive church; the Hebrew
“ congregations, for which St. Matthew wrote, and
“ the Greek congregations, for which St. Luke
“ wrote; should find an express record of the mi-
“ raculous conception each in its proper gospel?”

Again:—“ We can satisfy ourselves and others
“ with saying that the Apostles applied the scrip-
“ tures according to the best of their judgment,
“ which would of course (without any particular
“ illumination, which does not appear to have
“ been necessary in their case) be biased by the
“ mode of applying them prevalent in their age
“ and country; and that consequently we are at li-
“ berty to judge of the propriety of all their quotati-

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“ ons,

³See more to the same purpose in his Lordship’s Tracts, p. 326.

“ons, as well as of those made by persons now
“living.”

Again:—“As to the Apostles there will perhaps
“be no difficulty in admitting, that the great ob-
“ject

*Theological Repository, vol. 4. p. 23.—I cannot help wishing that the Reader, who is desirous of information on the subject of the New Testament quotations from the Old, would be at the trouble of consulting with care the second, third, and fourth chapters of Allix's Judgment of the Jewish Church. If he is a stranger to that excellent and decisive book, he will probably meet with some information and satisfaction.

See also Michaelis' Lectures on the New Testament, sect. 11. —Consult likewise the very learned Dr. Randolph's "Prophecies and other Texts cited in the New Testament, compared with the original Hebrew and the Septuagint."—See moreover Dr. Henry Owen's "Modes of Quotation used by the Evangelical Writers explained and vindicated."

We have an epitome of this learned and excellent work drawn by the Author himself, which I will here lay before the Reader.—
“Of all that has been said this is the sum—That Jesus Christ,
“whose history we read in the New Testament, was the true Mes-
“siah predicted in the Old—that this is manifestly confirmed and
“ascertained by the exact completion of the several prophecies
“that went before concerning him—that if some of the prophecies
“were anciently, by the Jews, either interpreted of, or applied to,
“other persons and times than those of the Messiah, yet is the
“sense given them by Christ and his Apostles highly to be prefer-
“red; for the Jews easily might, and indeed evidently did, mis-
“take the sense of many prophecies, which foretold events that
“were long after to happen; but it was impossible that Christ and
“his Apostles should ever err in the true meaning of any one, as
“they were really endued with supernatural powers, and guided
“by the influence of that Spirit, which searcheth and knoweth all
“things, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. 2. 10. Their
“power of working miracles plainly proved that God was with
“them, and inspired as well as strengthened them. Their *inspi-*
“*ration* again as plainly proved, that their interpretation of the
“prophecies was certain and infallible: not to insist, as a further
“proof, on their being all throughout punctually accomplished
“according to the very sense in which they interpreted them.”

“ ject of their mission did not require any particular illumination with respect to the knowledge of the scriptures; and therefore that they would be naturally influenced by the mode of interpretation, which was generally adopted by their countrymen.”⁵

And again:—“ It is evident that the Apostles often applied the scriptures very improperly, and with no better judgment than their unbelieving countrymen.”⁶

By these declarations the authority of the whole New Testament is fapped to its lowest foundations! In vain does this over-zealous Divine write upon the evidences of Christianity, in vain make his boast

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of

⁵Theolog. Repos. vol. 4. p. 112.—This assertion of the Doctor is in direct opposition to Luke 24. 45, and 2 Cor. 3. 14—16.

⁶Ibid. p. 442.—One cannot wonder the learned Doctor treats the holy scriptures with this unpardonable freedom. He well knows the bible, as we now have it, and Socinianism, can never stand together. And therefore while, at one time, he professes great regard to the sacred volume, at another he gives it a fly stab, rejects its authority, and selects only such parts as seem to favour his own hypothesis. “ For,” as Dr. Harwood observes, “ we must have *new* scriptures, and a *new* revelation to prove and establish Socinianism: for I am persuaded,” continues he, “ it will never be satisfactorily demonstrated from the *present* sacred volume.”

Socinian Scheme, p. 29.

It appears from the above quotations, that Dr. Priestley considers the Scripture as being full of blunders. Mr. Locke tells us, however, “ It is all pure, all sincere; nothing too much, nothing wanting.” And the celebrated French poet Boileau says, that “ every word and syllable of the bible ought to be adored.” Let the serious Reader judge, whether of these opinions is most worthy of a book, which professes to have been written by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit, for the instruction and salvation of mankind.

of being a believer, in vain attempt to convert Jews and infidels, while he treats the bible with such manifest impropriety. What he builds up with one hand he pulls down with the other. I would charitably hope he has good intentions. He says he has, and I will give him full credit for the assertion. How far these intentions may excuse him in the sight of the All-Seeing, is not with us to determine. There can, however, be no doubt concerning the pernicious tendency of the above, and such like declarations. If Dr. Priestley has a right to reject one part of the word of God, I have an equal right to reject another, and every man living is set at liberty from all scriptural restraint whatever. The Deists themselves do not reject the whole bible, but only such parts as they judge not agreeable to their system.⁷

Again:—

⁷The Socinians are so determined against the divinity of our blessed Saviour, that, rather than admit the doctrine, several of them will reject some of the most material parts of the New Testament itself. Dr. Priestley has not yet told us, I think, how much he receives, and how much he cashiers. From the above quotations, however, it is very manifest, that he treats the whole with great impropriety. The ancient Ebionites, we are told, rejected three of the gospels, and all St. Paul's epistles entirely, and the two first chapters of St. Matthew's gospel. Nay even the part of St. Matthew's gospel which they did retain, was not that which we now have, but only a spurious one. The Ebionites, or Socinians, of modern times, have trodden likewise in many of their footsteps. For the author of the Judgment of the Fathers, &c. rejects all the writings of St. John, both the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Revelation. He rejects likewise a good part of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and supposes the form of baptism in the 28 chapter of Matthew is interpolated. Men that will assert so boldly, without the shadow of a proof, it must be confessed, have the ad-

Again:—" I think I have shewn, that *the Apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively*, and therefore that " he wrote as any other person, of his turn of mind " and thinking, and in his situation, would have " written, without any particular inspiration."

Again:—" The Apostle Paul, especially if he be " the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, *has* " *strained very much, by the force of imagination*, to " reconcile the Jews to the christian religion, by " pointing out the *analogies* which *he imagined* the " rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion bore " to something in Christianity."

Again:—

yantage of others. They enjoy the exalted privilege of rejecting any thing, and establishing any thing, which may be agreeable to themselves, without controul. It is only saying such a book is spurious, and such a passage is interpolated, and the point in hand, be it what it may, is established or rejected. Indeed, no principles can stand before such excessive and impudent liberties.

See Bishop Bull's Discourse on the catholic doctrine concerning the blessed Trinity, vol. 3. p. 843—854.

¹History of Corruptions, vol. 2. p. 370.

²Ibid. vol. 1. p. 24.—To writers like Dr. Priestley, who seems to be utterly careless about the consequences which his writings may produce, it will not be amiss to recommend the observations of the celebrated Dr. Clarke:—" A free and impartial inquiry after " truth," says this great man, " wherever it is to be found, is indeed a noble and most commendable disposition? a disposition " which every man ought himself to labour after, and to the utmost of his power encourage in all others. It is the great foundation of all useful knowledge, of all true virtue, and of all sincere religion. But when a man, in his searches into the nature " of things, finds his enquiries leading him towards such notions " as, if they should prove true, would manifestly subvert the very " essences of good and evil, the least that a sober-minded man can " in such a case possibly be supposed to owe to God, to virtue, to the dignity of a rational nature, is, that he ought to be in the

Again:—"Notwithstanding the frequent mention
 " that is made of the love of God in the gift of his
 " Son by the Apostles, it is never said to undo any
 " thing that had been done at the fall, some passa-
 " ges of Paul alone excepted, who calls Christ, the
 " last Adam, and makes use of terms, which im-
 " ply, that death was introduced by Adam, as eter-
 " nal life is the gift of God by Christ. But you
 " know, that *the writings of this Apostle abound with*
 " *analogies and antitheses, on which no very serious*
 " *stresses can be laid.*"

When any expressions occur in the works of this great man and inspired Apostle, which oppose his favourite notions, Dr. Priestley easily gets over them by saying, "These are not in any historical
 " work, but only *incidental expressions in the Epistles*
 " *of St. Paul.*"

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" highest degree fearful and suspicious of himself, lest he be led
 " away by any prejudice, lest he be deceived by any erroneous ar-
 " gument, lest he suffer himself to be imposed on by any wrong
 " inclination. Too great an assurance in arguments of this nature,
 " even though they seemed at present to be demonstrations, re-
 " joicing in the strength of them and taking pleasure in the carry-
 " ing of such a cause; is what a good mind can never be capable
 " of. To such a person, the finding his own arguments unan-
 " swerable would be the greatest grief; triumphing in so melan-
 " choly a field would be the highest dissatisfaction; and nothing
 " could afford so pleasing, so agreeable a disappointment as to find
 " his own reasonings shewn to be inconclusive."

Remarks on a philosophical Enquiry concerning human liberty, p. 45.

¹Letters to Dr. Price, p. 159.

²Ibid. p. 118.—See an able defence of the Epistles of the New Testament in Dr. Whitby's General Preface prefixed to his Commentary.

The next censure seems to include all the Apostles, as though they and the primitive Fathers had colloqued

That the Apostles in general, and St. Paul in particular, spake and wrote by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, after the Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, is manifest from Mat. 10. 40... Ibid. 28. 19, 20... Luke 10. 16... Ibid. 24. 48, 49... John 8. 46, 47... Ibid. 12. 48... Ibid. 14. 12, 13, 16, 17, 26... Ibid. 16. 15, 14, 15... Acts. 2. 4... Rom. 2. 16... Ibid. 10. 14... 17... Ibid. 15. 16... Ibid. 16. 25, 26... 1 Cor. 1. 1... Ibid. 1. 24... Ibid. 2. 1... Ibid. 2. 6... 16... Ibid. 14. 37... 2 Cor. 1. 1... Ibid. 2. 12... Ibid. 11. 7... Ibid. 13. 3... Gal. 1. 8... 12... Ibid. 4. 14... Ep. 1. 1... Ibid. 1. 9... Col. 1. 1... Ibid. 1. 25... Ibid. 2. 2... Ibid. 3. 16... Phil. 4. 9... 1 Thes. 1. 5... Ibid. 2. 2, 8, 9... Ibid. 2. 4... Ibid. 2. 13... Ibid. 3. 2... Ibid. 4. 2... Ibid. 4. 8... Ibid. 4. 15... 2 Thes. 2. 15... 1 Tim. 1. 1... Ibid. 1. 10... 2 Tim. 1. 1... Ibid. 1. 13, 14... 1 Pet. 1. 12... 2 Pet. 3. 2... Ibid. 3. 15. 16... 1 John 4. 6.

All these declarations of Christ and his Apostles, are either true or they are false. If they are true, the Apostles in general, and St. Paul in particular, spake and wrote, at all times (after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, but when they declared the contrary) by divine aid and inspiration. If these declarations are false, St. Paul especially, and the Apostles in general, were impostors and deceivers. Let Dr. Priestley take which side of the dilemma he pleases.

But should we for a moment suppose, that St. Paul did not write by the special guidance of the Spirit, it will not therefore follow, that his arguments should be less just and conclusive than the arguments of Dr. Priestley, *his new antagonist*. The Apostle appears to have been, independent of inspiration, at least, speaking moderately, a man of as large a size as the Doctor can pretend to be. "He had a vigorous and comprehensive mind. He was acquainted with all the comments and all the refinements upon the law. He was conversant with the Grecian poets and with the Grecian customs; he understood their philosophy. He was not liable to the charge of credulity, for his prejudices had turned the contrary way. Under such circumstances a sober-minded critic would not hastily charge him with error and sophistry, with a misconstruction of prophecies, or an improper application of them. Much less would he suppose that an epistle, which is to be considered as the model of our argumentation with the Jews, should be so figurative as to have types without antitypes, shadows without corresponding substance, mentioning sacrifices

collogued together to obscure and disguise the pure religion of Jesus Christ. "However," says he,
 " the

" without any solid meaning, but to beguile rooted prepossession
 " into compliance, and reducing the Saviour of the world to the
 " quality of a mere martyr and a mere man."

Croft's Sermons at the Bampton Lecture, p. 53.

" If the Apostles were not inspired with the knowledge of the
 " facts recorded by them," says a sensible writer; " then Luke and
 " Mark, who were not immediately the disciples of Jesus Christ,
 " as they received their information at second hand, it is possible
 " might be deceived; consequently, little dependence is to be put
 " upon those things which they relate, of which the other Evange-
 " lists take no notice. Besides, if they, and the authors of the
 " Epistles were fallible, their doctrinal writings can never be con-
 " sidered as binding the faith of Christians; because every one who
 " finds his particular evil way or opinion condemned by an aposto-
 " lical rule or precept will directly impeach the sacred author's
 " authority in that particular instance, or question the truth of his
 " being inspired at the time of his delivering it; thus the whole,
 " or the major part of the New Testament will be rejected by va-
 " rious men, in compliance with their own humours, as weak, un-
 " authoritative, and defective in argument."

These observations are awfully true. Many of Dr. Priestley's greatest admirers, to my certain knowledge, treat the bible with the utmost impropriety. Though, like the Doctor, they pretend to believe it, yet press them closely in argument, and they will immediately deny its divine authority. Nor has the Doctor any just cause to be offended with me for saying he only *pretends* to believe the bible. The above quotations from his own works, in my opinion, fully justify the imputation. He acknowledges he does not believe some things in it. He considers both the Old and New Testament as abounding with error. Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, were all mistaken. He no where tells us, that I recollect, what parts in particular of the word of God he does believe. We are therefore at liberty to charge him with a general disbelief of it. If indeed to believe that Christ was the Messiah is all that is meant by believing the bible, we must do Dr. Priestley the justice to acknowledge that he avows this in the most explicit terms. But then he says we must expect another of a description quite different, which seems utterly inconsistent with his former avowal. This is good news for the poor Jews, at least. I rather wonder they do not all flock to his standard, and become universal converts to a doctrine so palatable to flesh and blood. And yet it does not appear, that

“ the disguise in which this simple religion appears,
 “ as delivered to us through the hands of the Apostles and primitive Fathers, is not so close, but
 “ that, with proper attention, we are able to look
 “ through it, and discern its true lineaments.”

In

either he, or the Socinians of the sixteenth century, have made any considerable number of converts from the race of Abraham.

The ancient Jews pretended to believe the writings of Moses, and were much displeased with those who called their faith in question; but our Saviour charges them with infidelity, notwithstanding all their pretensions to the contrary. See John 5. 39—47. To his own Master, however, Dr. Priestley stands or falls. We have no right to judge of any man's motives, any farther than he avows them. We are not equal to the task; Christ was. He might therefore pronounce upon them with propriety; we cannot. And with respect to the final fates of men, we are equally incapable of determining. *We shall all stand before his judgement seat, and receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad.* What allowances will be made for my errors, or for the errors of Dr. Priestley, at that awful time, I know not. I have no doubt, however, but every allowance will be granted that we can reasonably desire. Dr. Priestley thinks we are idolatrous for paying divine honour unto Jesus: we think he rejects the only foundation of our redemption. The Lord judge between us. I wish the Doctor as well as I do my own soul. I believe him to be in a dangerous error. I have made free to tell him so; and, as far as my influence goes, I have endeavoured to caution my fellow creatures against the poison of his opinions. The Doctor will pardon me for so doing. He himself is acting in the same manner. God grant we may both find mercy of the Lord in the day of his appearing.

*Theological Repository, vol. 1. p. 428.—“ We have the
 “ clearest display of Christianity in the Epistles of the New Testament, every thing necessary to complete the system of divine revelation being finished when the inspired penmen composed these
 “ parts of holy writ. All that our Lord thought fit to leave unsaid
 “ had been revealed to the Apostles by his Spirit, as he had promised. His death, and resurrection, with the subsequent events,
 “ had dispelled all darkness from the minds of the disciples. They
 “ now saw clearly the fulfilment of the Old Testament types and
 “ prophecies concerning the Messiah, and were no longer in doubt
 “ with regard to his character and offices. In the epistolary part
 “ of the New Testament, therefore, we have declared unto us the

SECTION VII.

IN all these strange and unfounded assertions, Dr. Priestley seems to have trodden in the footsteps of his predecessors in the same cause. Socinus, for instance, the father of the present unitarians, declares, that "though the doctrine (of the atonement and satisfaction of Christ) were found, not only *once*, " but *frequently written* in the holy scriptures;* I, " indeed,

" whole counsel of God, and herein it is asserted, with the greatest precision, that our justification does not flow solely from the goodness of the Father, without any other medium than our repentance and reformation; but that mercy is extended to repenting and believing sinners through the Son, and that they only are entitled to salvation who come unto God through him."—How much more just, and honourable for the word of God, are these sentiments, than the strange assertions of the Doctor? He talks of "disguises," as though the New Testament were delivered in types and shadows as well as the Old; whereas the veil is now taken away, and *we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*. See an excellent little pamphlet upon the atonement written by Mr. William Key, Surgeon, of Leeds, in answer to Dr. Priestley and Mr. Graham, page 82.

*If liberties of this kind are to be granted, it is of very little consequence, what information the scriptures contain. Such men do not properly interpret the word of God; they make a new religion.

Dr. Priestley says, that the charge which has been brought against him of *undervaluing and rejecting the authority of the scriptures* is "contrary to fact and all appearance of fact," and calls it "a gross and unfounded calumny." See Letters to Mr. Burn, p. 3.

How far this declaration of the learned Doctor can be made consistent with all the above degrading sentiments concerning the holy scriptures I leave the Reader to determine.

A late pious and celebrated Author says, "It would be excusable, if these menders of the bible would offer their hypothesis modestly. But one cannot excuse them, when they not only obtrude their novel scheme with the utmost confidence, but even ridicule that scriptural one, which always was, and is now held by men

“ indeed, would not therefore believe it to be entirely as you suppose. Though the divine oracles may attest things to be so, in appearance; yet they cannot, by any means, be admitted, because they are very evidently impossible: and, therefore, the sacred words are sometimes explained, even by unusual tropes, to a sense different from their literal signification.”⁵

Again:—“ Should there be found some places of scripture, where it should be expressly written, that God was made man, or did assume human flesh; they should not presently be taken according as the words sound, since that is altogether repugnant to the Divine Majesty; but would require to be expounded in such manner, as by figures not utterly unusual in speech a fitter meaning might appear to us.”⁶

Again:—“ If not once only, but often, it should be written in the sacred scriptures, that Christ made satisfaction to God for sins; I would not therefore believe, that the matter is so, as you imagine.”⁷

Again:—

“ of the greatest learning and piety in the world. Hereby they promote the cause of infidelity more effectually, than either Hume or Voltaire.”

Wesley's Journals, No. 16. p. 115

⁵De Servatore, part 3. chap. 6.

⁶Socin. Disput. de Jesu Christo, Operum Tom. 1. p. 714.

⁷Idem de Satisf. p. 3. c. 6. p. 204.

Again:—"Any, the greatest force is to be used
 "with words, rather than take them in the obvi-
 "ous sense."^s

These four declarations of Socinus are such as to render all revelation vague and indecisive to the last degree. It shall be any thing or nothing as suits the interpreter. Besides, he takes for granted what is to be proved. How does he know that a Divine Person cannot assume human flesh? Who told him so? It is certain, the whole Heathen world was of a different opinion. Did not all the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome take on them at times the human form for various purposes? Have not angels in all ages done the same? How does Socinus know then, that the true Son of God may not unite himself in some such way as the former are said to have done, and as the latter certainly have? And how can he tell that this Divine Person might not by his sufferings and death make a real and proper atonement to his great Father for the sins of the world? It is certain the scripture *seems* to favour both these doctrines: many men, as learned and as pious as he was, have been of this opinion: such peremptoriness therefore ill becomes this gentleman. Expressions less positive would have been more seemly. He comes not to the bible to learn his religion, but he brings his scheme of things to the

^sSecond Epist. to Balcerimicus, Operum, tom. 1. p. 425.

the bible, and then he twists, and turns, and winds it to his own preconceived system. This is directly opposite to what is right. A conduct the very reverse would be infinitely proper.

And again :—" The precepts of the Old Testament are for the most part such, that it is hard to believe they proceed from God, they are either so light, or vain, or superstitious, or even foolish and ridiculous; and, in short, they seem not to be worthy of God."

Well done, master Socinus! This is a coup de main. What could Voltaire, that hoary infidel; or what could the devil himself, that enemy of righteousness, and father of lies, say more effectually to subvert the whole system of the Jewish and Christian revelations? If this is Socinianism, *my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!*

The

Second Epist. to Dudith.

A writer of this description in the last century, with whose name I am not acquainted, tells his readers, that several of the writings which go under the denomination of Scripture, are mere "fiction and romance, and pieces of wit and fancy:" that other things in the bible are writ "with excessive cholor, and impatience, and unworthy, not only of a pious man, but even of an honest and wise heathen."

These are the accounts this Socinian writer gives us of the bible. It is well known however, that "the whole Christian and Jewish church time out of mind have looked upon the books contained in the Jewish canon to be inspired, and have, upon all occasions, appealed to their authority as such."

See Lowth on the Inspiration of the Old and New Testament, p. 185; and 248, a work that obviates most of the cavils of Dr. Priestley, and other authors of a similar complexion.

The same gentleman denies also, that God can certainly foresee free and contingent actions. "Since
 " no reason," says he, " can be assigned, and no
 " place of holy scripture can be produced from
 " whence it can be clearly collected,* that God
 " knew all things which come to pass before they
 " do take place, we ought to conclude, that such
 " foreknowledge of God ought not to be asserted
 " by us; especially, since there are reasons not a
 " few to be adduced, and some testimonies of scrip-
 " ture are not wanting, which plainly deny any such
 " foreknowledge."

Schlichtingius

*Bishop Watson observes upon this notion, that " we ought to
 " mistrust the extent of our capacities, and to acknowledge, that
 " foresight appertains to God, and freedom to man, though we
 " cannot, in any wise, comprehend the possibility of their existence."

Mr. Locke, speaking on the same subject, says, " I own freely to
 " you the weakness of my understanding, that though it be un-
 " questionable that there is omnipotence and omniscience in God
 " our Maker, and I cannot have a clearer perception of any thing
 " than that I am free; yet I cannot make freedom in man con-
 " sistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as
 " fully persuaded of both as of any truths I most firmly assent to.
 " And therefore I have long since given off the consideration of
 " that question, resolving all into this short conclusion; that if it be
 " possible for God to make a free agent, then man is free, though
 " I see not the way of it."

See Bishop Watson's Sermons and Tracts, p. 142.

Consult also Clarke's Discourse on the Being and Attributes of
 God, p. 95.

Dr. Bentley too, a man whose penetration few will be inclined to
 call in question, delivers as his decided opinion, that " God can
 " foresee contingencies, the free resolves of rational agents, as well
 " as the most necessary events in the material and inanimate world:
 " but the divine prescience does not superadd nor imply a fatal ne-
 " cessity."—Sermons, p. 393.

Schlichtingius also, another author of the Socinian persuasion, speaking of the energy of divine grace, and the freedom of the human will, advances the following sentiment:—"We cannot conclude, because the scripture affirms them both, that therefore they are not repugnant the one to the other; but, as these two things are inconsistent, we ought rather to conclude, that one of them is not mentioned in scripture."

Because this gentleman finds himself unable to reconcile these two things, divine grace and human liberty, both which are doctrines most undoubtedly taught in holy writ, he takes his critical knife, and cuts the Gordian knot at one stroke, by positively denying the fact. Such men are never at a loss to prove any thing or nothing as suits their purpose. The bible is a mere nose of wax in their hands, and they take and twist it which way soever the fancy leads them.

Gustavus Ostorodus

*Ad Meisn. Def. Socin. p. 102.—"The men we have to deal with (the Socinians) do very confidently affirm any thing that comes into their heads, be it never so little probable, so they may thereby give any plausible solutions of the difficulties in which they find themselves entangled and perplex: and they are much given to vaunt of their unanswerable arguments, so they call them, which are many times but weak objections, such as men of learning and wit should be ashamed of."

Allix's Judgment, p. 8.

The late bishop Newton observes upon the Socinians, that their writings and apologies strike out no new light, furnish no new matter, nor even one new argument to the purpose: they are only a dull repetition of stale objections, which have been refuted over and over again."

Ostorodus says, that “when Solomon in his Proverbs speaks any thing concerning manners, if it be not expressly spoken, that is, either commanded or forbid by Moses in the Law, it is no more obligatory than the wise advice and doctrine of any other man.”^a

Enjedinus, an overseer of the Socinian churches in Transilvania, attacks the authority of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews in strong terms. He says, “the things which this author writes concerning the tabernacle, chap. 9. 1. may be confuted out of the Old Testament—that he seems to use foolish arguings, and to assert some things which are manifestly false—and that this Epistle seems to favour certain heretical and erroneous opinions.”^b

“If,” says he again, “a concise, abrupt obscurity, inconsistent with itself, and made up of allegories, is to be called sublimity of speech, I own John to be sublime: for there is scarce one discourse of Christ, which is not altogether allegorical, and very hard to be understood.”

Gagneius, another champion for Socinus, treats St. Paul again with equal indignity:—“I shall not a little glory,” says this vain man, “if I shall be found to give some light to Paul’s darkness; a darkness, as some think, industriously affected.”

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^aInstitut. cap. 30.

^bSee his Explicat. of this Epistle.

I will add the very just and smart reflections of the learned Blackwall upon these last two writers:—

“ Mind,” says he, “ the modesty and moderation of
“ the enemies of sound Christianity ! Let any of
“ the followers of these worthy interpreters of the
“ gospel, and champions of Christianity, speak
“ worse, if they can, of the ambiguous oracles of
“ the father of lies.

“ These fair-dealing gentlemen first disguise the
“ sacred writers, and turn them into a harsh allego-
“ ry, by eluding the express testimonies and proofs
“ of our Saviour’s eternal divinity ; and then charge
“ them with that obscurity and inconsistency, which
“ is plainly consequent upon that sense which their
“ heretical interpretations force upon them. They
“ outrage the divine writers in a double capacity :
“ first, they debase their sense as theologues and
“ commentators ; and then carp at and vilify their
“ language as grammarians and critics.”*

The learned Crellius also, another Socinian writer, as quoted by Bishop Stillingfleet, says, “ that
“ the Prophets and Apostles affected tricks of wit,
“ playing with words, using them sometimes in
“ one sense, and presently quite in another.”—So
he says of Isaiah, “ that he affects little elegancies
“ of words and verbal allusions, which makes him
“ use words sometimes out of their proper and na-

G 2

“ tural

*Sacred Classics, vol. 1, p. 228.

"tural sense." Thence he tells us, "the sufferings of Christ are called chastisements, though they have nothing of the nature of chastisements in them."

Smalcus, another writer of the same complexion, is not ashamed thus to express himself:—"We believe, that though we should find it, *not once, nor twice, but very frequently and most expressly written in the scripture, that God was made man*; it would be much better, as it is an absurd proposition, entirely contrary to sound reason, and full of blasphemy, to invent some way of speaking, which might render it safe to be affirmed of God, rather than to understand it in the literal sense."

I will close these instances of Socinian writers with the declaration of Le Clerc, and Dr. Whitby's reflections upon it:—"Because," says this Dutch Divine, "the allegorical writers of the Jews at that time accommodated innumerable places to the Messiah, not relying upon any grammatical interpretation, but a certain old custom of explaining the scripture after this manner; and because they interpreted the hundred and tenth psalm of the Messiah, the sacred writer makes
"use."

⁶On the Sufferings of Christ, ch. 2. sect. 11.—The same Crellius not being able to accommodate the introduction of St. John's gospel to the Socinian scheme, rejected it as spurious, without any reasonable pretence whatever for so doing.

⁶Hom. 8. ad cap. 1. Joh.—

“ use of that interpretation to his purpose ; and be-
 “ cause they acknowledged the Messiah ought to
 “ be like Melchisedec, he reasons against them
 “ from their own concessions, not against other
 “ men who might have denied what he affirmed :
 “ otherwise, if the thing be considered in itself, no
 “ strong or grammatical argument can be drawn
 “ against others from that history; and therefore
 “ such things are not too much to be urged now,
 “ because that way of explaining scripture is grown
 “ out of use.” ‘ That is,’ says Dr. Whitby upon
 this insufferable passage, ‘ the Apostle proceeds
 ‘ all along upon weak grounds, and urges argu-
 ‘ ments, that in themselves depend on falsehoods,
 ‘ only because some silly Jews had said the same
 ‘ thing before him. I read indeed in profane
 ‘ Celsus this vile reflection on the sacred penmen,
 ‘ that they produce things unknown, fanatical, un-
 ‘ certain, and which no wise man thinks to be of
 ‘ any strength: but I am sorry to find a Christian
 ‘ writer thus exposing them to the contempt and
 ‘ scorn of anti-scripturists. *Christ is a priest for-*
 ‘ *ever after the order of Melchisedec,* saith the Apos-
 ‘ tle, Heb. 6. 20. So indeed you tell us out of
 ‘ the idle tales, and allegorical interpretations of
 ‘ some brain-sick Jews, saith Mr. Le Clerc; but
 ‘ without all ground. *It is exceedingly manifest,*
 ‘ saith the Apostle, *that another priest should arise,*
 ‘ *after the order of Melchisedec,* chap. 7. 15. It

‘ is no such thing, saith Mr. Le Clerc; this follows
 ‘ only from the vain concessions of the Jews: ano-
 ‘ ther man may deny what you thus confidently
 ‘ affirm.—*It is exceedingly manifest*, saith the Apos-
 ‘ tle; *for the scripture testifies this, by saying, Thou*
 ‘ *art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec,*
 ‘ verse 17. And God hath confirmed this by an
 ‘ oath, in these words, *The Lord sware, and will*
 ‘ *not repent, Thou art a priest forever.* You make
 ‘ use of a Rabbinical interpretation, saith Mr. Le
 ‘ Clerc, and call that falsely a scripture testimony;
 ‘ but another man may deny what you thus assume,
 ‘ for no strong or grammatical argument can be
 ‘ drawn from these words.”

Such

‘ Whitby’s Comment on the New Testament, Hebr. 7. 1.—See
 more of Le Clerc’s indecent liberties with the writings of the New
 Testament in Milner’s Animadversions, passim.

I am sorry to have occasion to observe, that the amiable Mr.
 Lindsey, to whom I am under great obligations, which I have a
 sincere pleasure in acknowledging, has fallen into this degrading
 mode of interpretation; in order to establish that system of religion
 he has so ardently embraced. Indeed, his scheme can never be
 maintained upon the principles of fair and moderate interpretation.
 This appears to me a great and just objection to it. But his zeal
 for the interests of that party in which he is embarked, will not
 suffer him to discover the violence he has for many years been do-
 ing to the word of God. Abundance of instances might be pro-
 duced from his own writings to justify these assertions; but I will
 transcribe only the following, which I find at the 148th. page of
 Dr. Price’s sermons on the Christian Doctrine, and call upon the
 Reader to judge, whether, if such interpretations are to be con-
 sidered as the only just ones, the bible is not the most fallacious book
 in the world. If he wishes to see any other specimens of a similar
 kind he may be amply gratified in the perusal of this very worthy
 and ingenious gentleman’s various publications. They contain

Such are the opinions of these writers concerning the authority of holy scripture. I believe the
 G 4 discerning

much truth, but, as it seems to me, much *dangerous* error. I don't know whether even Swedenborg himself has wandered much farther from the path of scriptural truth, than this learned man and his friend Dr. Priestley.—But—the passage I promised to produce from Dr. Price is as follows:—Mr. Lindsey says in his Sequel, page 466, &c. that the exaltation of Christ to God's right-hand, *far above all might and dominion; and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him*; is spoken of in accommodation to the ideas of the Jews and Gentiles of those days, who believed there *were* such spiritual beings as angels and demons; and means only the display of a divine power in the support of the gospel and its establishment among men.—The throne to which Christ was advanced, was, according to him (*ibid.* p. 243) not any station of dignity in heaven, but the subjection of the world to his gospel; and his glory with the Father, mentioned John 17. 5. was the glorious success of the gospel. *His power over all flesh* (John 17. 2.) *to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him*, was only his power “to afford men full assurance of the benevolent purpose of God to bestow eternal life upon them, and to furnish them with the means of virtue that lead to it,” p. 249. “Agreeably to the prejudices and imaginations of Jews and Gentiles, the subjection of all mankind to the rules of piety and virtue delivered by Christ is shadowed out under the imagery of a mighty king to whom all power was given in heaven and earth, placed above angels, principalities, &c.” p. 473. Ingenious men will sometimes advance very strange and absurd propositions. One would have supposed, did we not know the serious spirit of the writer, that he rather meant to expose, than explain, the word of God. With equal ease might one convert the whole mystery of redemption into an allegory, as some have considered the history of the fall. Deism itself, is, in my opinion, more defensible than Christianity, if such interpretations are to be admitted.

Mr. Lindsey has moreover been so much off his guard as to assert, “that the Fathers of the three first centuries, and consequently all Christian people, for upwards of three hundred years after Christ, till the Council of Nice, were generally Unitarians, what is now called either Arjan or Socinian.” Apology, p. 23, 24. Now the truth of this assertion I, with all possible confidence, deny, and hope to make appear at large in another place, that there is not even the shadow of truth in it. In the mean time I shall refer

discerning Reader will agree with me, that if Socinianism requires such violence to be done to that divine volume, it is not so near an universal reception as Dr. Priestley and his friends predict it to be. Such declarations are, in fact, a giving up the point. No man need wish to reduce the enemies of sound Christianity to more humiliating concessions, than to oblige them, either to renounce their heterodoxy, or to treat the word of God with such barefaced indignity. The cause must be desperate which requires such desperate expedients."

SECTION

the Reader, who wishes for satisfaction on this head, to Mr. Burgh's "Inquiry into the Belief of the Christians of the first three centuries, respecting the one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:" and to Dr. Randolph's "Vindication of the Worship of the Son and the Holy Ghost:" where I promise him ample evidence to the contrary. Nay, even Mr. Lindsey's great friend and champion, the Rev. Dr. Priestley, deserts him on this ground; (I call him his champion, because Mr. Lindsey says "he is equal to an host of adversaries." *Vindicia*, pref. p. 4.) for he gives up the great bulk of the Fathers in despair: "I allow," says he, "all that bishop Bull and Mr. Burgh ascribe to the Fathers of the second and third century; I allow that they held the doctrine of the divinity of the Son, at least, but it was in a qualified sense, and by no means the same that was maintained after the Council of Nice." *Defence of Unit. for 1787*, p. 139. See, by all means, Burgh's and Randolph's valuable works, with bishop Bull's Defence, and then judge.

"What do these men mean by such suggestions as these? Are they resolved to set up Deism among us; and in order thereunto, to undermine the authority of the New Testament? For it is not only St. Matthew's gospel, but St. Luke's and St. John's, which they strike at, under the pretence of representing the arguments of these wretched Ebionites. If their arguments are mean and trifling, and merely precarious, why are they not slighted and answered by such as pretend to be Christians? If they think them good, we see what we have to do with these

“men: it is not the doctrine of the Trinity so much as the authority of the gospels, which we are to maintain against them: and not those only; for *the Ebionites rejected all St. Paul's epistles, and called him an apostate and a transgressor of the law.* What say our Unitarians to this? Why truly, *This comes from Epiphanius, and because he quotes no author, it seems to be one of his malicious tales.* This is a very short way of answering, if it would satisfy any men of sense. But they ought to have remembered, that within a few pages, they alledge Epiphanius as a very competent witness about the Ebionites, *because he was born in Palestine and lived very near it.* But we do not rely wholly upon Epiphanius in this matter. For those whom they allow to be the best witnesses, as to the doctrine of the Nazarenes, say the same thing concerning them: *As the most learned Origen, as they call him, who lived a long time in Syria and Palestine itself: and he affirms, that both sorts of Ebionites rejected St. Paul's epistles; and Theodoret, who, say they, lived in Caesarea, where the Nazarenes most abound, affirms of them, that they allowed only the gospel according to the Hebrews, and called the Apostle an apostate; by whom they meant St. Paul. And the same is said by St. Jerome who conversed among them; that they look on St. Paul as a transgressor of the law, and receive none of his writings.*—Have we not now a very comfortable account of the canon of the New Testament from these ancient Unitarians? And if our modern ones account them their predecessors, we may judge what a mean opinion they must have of the writings of the New Testament. For if they had any concernment for them, they would never suffer such scandalous insinuations to pass without a severe censure and a sufficient answer. But their work seems to be rather to pull down, than to establish the authority of revealed religion; and we know what sort of men are gratified by it.”

Stillington on the Trinity, p. 26—29.

“The Ebionites had many things in common with the Nazarenes,” says Michaelis, “but they had their peculiar, and those monstrous, errors. They likewise made use of the Hebrew gospel of St. Matthew, but they had it more corrupted. Epiphanius says it was defective, corrupt, and imperfect.—The two first chapters—are omitted, and more or less of the beginning is wanting in most of the Hebrew gospels.”

Lectures on the New Testament, sect. 90.

We have before observed, that Dr. Priestley, in order to get clear of the miraculous conception, rejects the two first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke's gospels. I have offered some reasons which appear to me conclusive for their authenticity. To these, however, I would moreover add in this place, that, besides Ignatius, the disciple of St. John, who asserted the miraculous concep-

SECTION VIII.

HOW different to these hateful declarations^o of Dr. Priestley, and his predecessors in the same

tion, and consequently held the genuineness of these chapters, Justin, who died a martyr, A. D. 167, and Irenæus, who was beheaded, A. D. 202, both frequently quote the four chapters in question. And it is remarkable, that Tertullian also, who lived to a good old age, and died, A. D. 246, not only frequently quotes the same chapters, but expressly says, that the authentic copies of the scriptures were extant in the churches founded by the Apostles in his days. His words are, “*quorum literæ authenticæ adhuc recitantur.*” It is well known likewise, that most of the following Fathers, whose writings are come down to our own times, frequently quote the same chapters; and none of the Ancients ever called their authenticity in question, but the Ebionites, or other heretics, who rejected at the same time nearly the whole of the New Testament.—For some thoughts on the miraculous conception see Allix’s Reflections upon the books of the N. T. chap. 8.

“The Fathers of the church were unanimous in their belief of the inspiration of the holy scriptures. They always spake of them with great reverence and respect, whereas these Socinian writers treat them little better than the deists themselves. I will produce a few of their declarations in opposition to Dr. Priestley and his learned associates.

1. Clemens Romanus says, “that the Apostles preached the gospel, being filled with the Holy Spirit: that the scriptures are the true word of the Spirit, and that Paul wrote to the Corinthians things that were true by the aid of the Spirit.”
2. Polycarp tells the Philippians, “that none could attain the wisdom of Paul, by which he wrote to them.”
3. Justin Martyr says, “that the gospels were written by men full of the Holy Ghost, and that the sacred writers spoke by inspiration.”
4. Irenæus says, “that all the Apostles received the gospel by divine revelation as well as Paul, and that by the will of God they delivered it to us as the foundation and pillar of our faith; that the scriptures were dictated by the Spirit of God, and therefore it is wickedness to contradict them, and sacrilege to make any alteration in them.”

^oGrotius and others interpret these words of the original copies of the books of the N. T. in the hand writing of their respective authors. See De Veritate, b. 3. c. 2. and Murray’s Evidences, p. 89.

same cause, were the sentiments of the following

5. Clemens Alexandrinus says, " that we who have the scriptures are taught of God ; that the scriptures are established by the authority of God ; that the whole scripture is the law of God, and that they are all divine."

6. Origen says, " that the scriptures proceeded from the Holy Spirit ; that there is not one tittle in them but what expresses a divine wisdom ; that there is nothing in the law, or the prophets, or the gospels, or the epistles, which did not proceed from the fulness of the Spirit ; that we ought with all the faithful to say, that the scriptures are divinely inspired ; that the gospels are admitted as divine in all the churches of God ; that the scriptures are no other than the organs of God."

7. Tertullian testifies, " that scripture is the basis of faith ; that all Christians prove their doctrines out of the Old and New Testament ; and that the majesty of God suggested what Paul wrote."

8. An ancient writer in Eusebius says, " that they who corrupt the sacred scriptures abolish the standard of the ancient faith, neglecting the words of the divine writings, out of regard to their own reasonings ; and afterwards, that they either do not believe that the Holy Spirit uttered the divine scriptures, and then they are infidels, or think themselves wiser than the Spirit, and so seem to be possessed."

9. Theophilus Antiochenus says, " that the Evangelists and Apostles wrote by the same Spirit that inspired the Prophets."

10. The succeeding fathers of the church speak so expressly and copiously on this head, that it seems not necessary to pursue the catalogue any further.

Doddridge's Lectures, p. 325.

We may here add the words of the Emperor Constantine the Great to the same purpose:—" It would be a grievous, a very grievous thing" says he, " if, after the enemies (the Heathens) are destroyed, and there are none to oppose us, we should fall out among ourselves, to the great joy and pleasure of the adversaries ; especially being to debate about divine matters, and having before us the doctrine written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit : for the gospel, and the writings of the Apostles, and ancient Prophets, plainly teach us what notions we ought to entertain concerning the nature of God. Wherefore laying aside all pernicious contention, let us from the inspired oracles take a solution of all our questions."

Speech to the Council of Nice.

See other testimonies to the inspiration of the holy scriptures from the Fathers in Whitby's General Preface to the Gospels, p. 13. 14.

ing Worthies! Men, surely as capable of judging concerning truth and error as either he, or any of his Socinian brethren can pretend to be! They were persons of equal learning, at least, to speak modestly of them; of equal compass and strength of mind; of equal piety and regard to truth; and yet they always held the holy scriptures in the highest estimation. "Oh," said that great French scholar Salmasius, when he came to die, "I have lost a world of time; of time, the most precious thing in the world; whereof had I but one year longer, it should all be spent in David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles." It is exceedingly probable from this solemn declaration, made at the most solemn of all seasons, that Salmasius had a very different opinion of St. Paul from the Doctor, who has the vanity to say, "*He thinks he has shewn that the Apostle often reasons inconclusively.*"

"Propose

"How much more becomingly does the late Mr. Robinson of Cambridge speak of the writings of this great Apostle? "Possibly," says he, "we may not perceive the coherence of some of St. Paul's discourses, particularly in his epistles: but that may be owing, either to our want of attending to the drift of the apostle, or to our ignorance of some opinions, customs, or other particulars to which he may refer, well known in the time when he wrote, on which account some passages in his letters may appear dark to us, which shone with a full light to those to whom they were directed. But for the most part the coherence and forcible reasoning of this Apostle's discourses in his letters are plainly conspicuous to attentive readers. With what force of reasoning does he in some of his epistles shew the inability of the Mosaic law to justify men? What a chain of solid reasoning do we particularly find in his epistle to the Hebrews, about the insufficien-

“ Propose to me any thing out of the bible,” says the immortal Chillingworth, “ and require whether I believe it or no; and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it hand and heart; as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it is true.”²

Again:—“ I profess sincerely, that I believe all those books of scripture, which the church of England accounts canonical, to be the *infallible* word of God. I believe all things evidently contained in them; all things evidently, or even probably, deducible from them.”³

The

“ cy of the ancient sacrifices? With how great strength of reasoning does the Apostle in his letter to the Romans, endeavour to convince the Jews, that God is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews?”

Translation of Claude's Essay, vol. 1. p. 40.

*Religion of Protestants, ch. 6. sect. 56.—¹Ibid. pref. p. 12.—The reflections of the excellently learned Bishop Newcome upon the four gospels are worthy the most serious attention of all the friends of religion and learning. Dr. Middleton and Dr. Priestley had both made objections to several parts of those inestimable writings. The Bishop delivers his opinion in the following most candid and agreeable manner:—“ I have endeavoured,” says he, “ to solve every seeming inconsistency which others have imputed to the Evangelists, or which I could discern on a careful study of them. Some of the difficulties are such, that we may say of them, as Le Clerc says of the two genealogies, universam antiquitatem exercitam habuere. If my subject has occasionally led me to the discussion of minute points, let it be recollected that they are minutenesses in the most important history ever delivered to mankind.—

“ I have had a particular view to the difficulties proposed by Dr. Middleton with his usual eloquence and acuteness: and I had pleasure in observing, that this able writer is so weak in ma-

The no less celebrated Mr. Locke entertained
a much

“ ny of his attacks. I am hence partly persuaded, but more from
“ a close attention to the subject, that invincible objections cannot
“ be produced ; and that some friends to Christianity have granted
“ more respecting real contradictions in the gospel than its adver-
“ saries can extort.

“ Dr. Priestley in his late harmony has revived Mr. Mann’s
“ opinion with regard to our Lord’s ministerial year.—In other
“ respects the sentiments of Dr. Middleton and Dr. Priestley on
“ the subject of the four gospels bear a great resemblance to each
“ other.—Each denies the plenary and constant inspiration of the
“ Evangelists ; each thinks that his opinion on this subject pro-
“ motes the cause of Christianity ; each appeals to fact in proof of
“ it ; each allows imperfect information, and irreconcilable and
“ erroneous accounts, in these writers ; and each admits their evi-
“ dence in important facts, while he rejects it in some minute and
“ circumstantial ones.

“ The result of my thoughts and enquiries is, that every genuine
“ proposition in scripture, whether doctrinal or historical, contains
“ a truth when it is rightly understood ; that the Evangelists con-
“ ceived alike of the facts related by them, but sometimes place
“ them in different lights, and make a selection of different cir-
“ cumstances accompanying them ; and that their seeming varia-
“ tions would instantly vanish, were the history known to us in its
“ precise order and in all its circumstances.

“ The real difficulties in harmonising the gospels may be redu-
“ ced to a few points. I am persuaded that all of them will at
“ length yield to the efforts of rational criticism ; and that the
“ master-key is attention to the manner of the Evangelists. I
“ shall not here discuss at large so copious a subject as the inspira-
“ tion of the scriptures ; but leave the Reader to judge whether
“ in the gospels this doctrine is contrary to plain fact, as some
“ have affirmed, and whether their more than human perfection is
“ affected by such supposed inconsistencies as Dr. Middleton and
“ Dr. Priestley have pointed out.—The difficulties are not inex-
“ tricable ; as some appear to be, which occur in the accounts of
“ Socrates by Plato and Xenophon.

“ Strong presumptions of their inspiration arise from an accurate
“ comparison of the gospels, from their being so wonderfully sup-
“ plimental to each other in passages reconcilable only by the
“ suggestion of a seemingly indifferent circumstance, and from
“ their real agreement in the midst of a seeming disagreement.
“ Truth, like honesty, often neglects appearances : hypocrisy and
“ imposture are always guarded.

Preface to the Harmony of the Gospels.

a much more honourable and becoming opinion of the word of God in general than the philosophical Divine in question. For, to a young man, desirous of information, he said, "Study the holy scriptures, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and *truth without any mixture of error*, for its matter."⁴

Again:—"Those who disguise or disesteem the holy scriptures, may be listed under some of these denominations—the proud, heady, high-minded, superficial boasters—the low, carnal, indolent, heavy sensualists—the confident, malicious, raging, wicked hearts of unbelief."⁵

Again:—"These holy writers, namely, the penmen of the scriptures, *inspired* from above, writ nothing but truth; and in most places very weighty truths to us now; for the expounding, clearing, and confirming of the Christian doctrine; and establishing those in it who had embraced it."⁶

Again:—"The other parts of *divine revelation* are objects of faith; and are so to be received. They are truths, whereof no one can be rejected; none that is once known to be such, may or ought to be disbelieved."

Again:

⁴Posthumous Works.

⁵Common Place Book, preface.

⁶Reasonab. of Christianity, p. 139.—⁷Ibid. same page.

Again :—Of the inspiration of holy scripture he frequently speaks thus:—"The unquestionable word of God."—"Truths delivered by the Spirit of God in the bible."—"The inspired writings of the holy scriptures."—"Every part of it is his word, and ought every part of it to be believed by every Christian man, according as God shall enable him to understand it."—"The whole revelation of God; all the divine truths contained in holy scripture; which every Christian man is under a necessity to believe, so far as it shall please God, upon his serious and constant endeavours, to enlighten his mind to understand them."

All these things this great man speaks of the holy scriptures in general. He bears likewise a most honourable testimony to the writings of St. Paul in particular; a testimony as opposite to that of Dr. Priestley as is the north from the south pole. I will be at the pains to transcribe it, that the reader may see how little dependence is to be placed upon the assertions of this learned Divine. For if any confidence is to be reposed in the judgment of man, on such matters as these, Mr. Locke's will go, and ought to go, at least, as far as Dr. Priestley's. In opposition then to the Doctor, who has treated the writings of St. Paul with such *shameful indignity*, this great man says:—"St. Paul is certainly a coherent, argumentative, pertinent writer."

Again: •

*Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, passim.

Again:—"Coherence of discourse, and a direct tendency of all parts of it to the argument in hand, are most eminently to be found in him. This I take to be his character, and doubt not but he will be found to be so upon diligent examination."

Again:—"He that reads St. Paul with attention, will easily observe, that as he was full of the doctrine of the gospel; so it lay all clear and in order open to his view. When he gave his thoughts utterance upon any point, the matter flowed like a torrent; but it is plain, it was a matter he was perfectly master of. He fully possessed the entire revelation he had received from God, had thoroughly digested it: all the parts were formed together in his mind into one well contracted harmonious body; so that he was no way at an uncertainty, nor even in the least at a loss concerning any branch of it. One may see his thoughts were all of a piece in all his epistles; his notions were at all times uniform, and constantly the same, though his expressions very various."

And again:—"I remembered that St. Paul was miraculously called to the ministry of the gospel, and declared to be a chosen vessel; that he had the whole doctrine of the gospel from God by immediate revelation, and was appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, for the propagating of it

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"in

“ in the Heathen world. This was enough to per-
 “ suade me, that he was not a man of loose and
 “ shattered parts, incapable to argue, and unfit to
 “ convince those he had to deal with. God knows
 “ how to chuse fit instruments for the business he
 “ employs them in. A large stock of Jewish learn-
 “ ing he had taken in at the feet of Gamaliel, and
 “ for his information in Christian knowledge, and
 “ the mysteries and depths of the dispensation of
 “ grace by Jesus Christ, God himself had condes-
 “ cended to be his instructor and teacher. The
 “ light of the gospel he had received from the foun-
 “ tain and Father of light himself, who, I concluded,
 “ had not furnished him in this extraordinary man-
 “ ner, if all this plentiful stock of learning and il-
 “ lumination had been in danger to have been lost,
 “ or proved useless, in a jumbled and confused
 “ head; nor have laid up such a store of admira-
 “ ble and useful knowledge in a man, who, for
 “ want of method and order, clearness of concep-
 “ tion, or pertinency of discourse, could not draw
 “ it out into use with the greatest advantages of
 “ force and coherence.”

• This is the testimony the profound author of the
 Essay on Human Understanding bears to the writ-
 ings of St. Paul. How different to that of the
 learned, ingenious, indefatigable, but sophistical
 and

* Essay for understanding of St. Paul's Epistles, *passim*.

and flippant Dr. Priestley, who has the effrontry to proclaim to all the Christian world, that *he thinks he has shewn St. Paul OFTEN reasons inconclusively!*

What it is to be a Philosopher! Any other man would

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have

^aThe term Philosopher, according to its proper derivation, has an excellent meaning, being no other than a friend of wisdom. But there is a spurious kind of knowledge, which has in all ages assumed the name of philosophy, while it continues an arrant stranger to its nature. If a man applies himself to the investigation of any of the objects of creation, and is successful enough to discover a few of the qualities which had not been noticed before, he is immediately complimented with the name of a philosopher, and ranked as a member of such societies as are instituted for the encouragement of natural knowledge, however immoral or deistical his conduct and sentiments may be in other respects. All this, however, is very well. It is proper honour should be given to whom honour is due. And it is readily confessed, that as an experimentalist on the air and other fluids Dr. Priestley is entitled to this honour above most men now living. He is, moreover, I am told, not only a very moral, but even an amiable man. And in all his pursuits he is extremely indefatigable, God having bestowed upon him an uncommonly active and vigorous mind. But, because he has had the good fortune to make several valuable discoveries on some of the fluids of nature, and because he is endowed with some natural and moral attainments superior to the great bulk of his fellow creatures, does it therefore follow, that he is competent to decide what is truth and what is error upon every other branch of science? And is he thence authorised to outrage the holy scriptures, to treat the Apostles of Christ with a vain superiority, and even to degrade the Redeemer of souls himself to the level of a mere, fallible, weak, peccable, and erroneous man like ourselves? Against all such characters St. Paul cautions the Colossians to be upon their guard:—*Beware, says the zealous Apostle, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men; after the rudiments of the world; and not after Christ; FOR IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY.*

It is evident from Dr. Priestley's own concessions, that the study of the works of nature, and the name of philosopher, by no means entitles any man, merely as such, to superior wisdom and discernment: for he himself has told us, that the greater part of his philosophical acquaintance ridicule his belief of Christianity. Nay, among the French, he says, no man of any reputed understanding

have modestly supposed, that the Apostle is perfectly right in all his reasonings, and that he himself laboured under some misapprehension, where they seemed to differ in their opinions. When Dr. Priestley

so much as pretends to believe the gospel. And all those who are called Philosophers in that moon-stricken country, a very respectable character informed him, with whom that same gentleman was acquainted, are even Atheists. This is a fine picture of modern philosophers; and drawn too by one of the honourable fraternity.* Let no man's heart therefore fail him because of a popular and respectable name. A great majority of that description are poor creatures. They have got a smattering of learning, and are thereby vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind. Proud they are and self-willed. Because they have picked up a few speculative notions concerning the works of creation, they ignorantly conceive themselves qualified to decide even upon the most abstruse subjects of religion and morals. They are the mere curs of philosophy, snarling and barking against God and his Christ, against Christianity and the truths it contains: or if, with Dr. Priestley, they admit of a Saviour at all, he shall be divested of every attribute that can qualify him for the office of Redeemer. To accomplish all this, the scriptures, which contain the revelation of God's will, and the only genuine source of information on subjects purely religious, shall be considered as the fallible, erroneous writings, of fallible, erroneous men. Some of them shall be embraced, and others rejected, according as they agree or disagree with their preconceived system of opinions. And, because Dr. Priestley has obtained a just reputation in philosophical experiments, if he does but assert any proposition in religion or morals to be true or false, the whole tribe of Philosophists will swear, that it is even so as the Doctor has said. A conduct like this, however, is unworthy of true philosophers. The very reverse is the only proper one for us to follow. We should, as much as possible, divest ourselves of all party prejudice, and blind submission to human authority, and (having first satisfied ourselves respecting the evidence for the truth of holy scripture) come to learn our religion from the word of God alone. Here we should set our foot. *Thus saith the Bible*—in its plain and unequivocal meaning—is worth a million of vague conjectures from the vain and self-conceited herd of empirics in philosophy.

* See page 23d. of these Strictures.

Priestley can shew equal credentials, we will give him equal credit. In the mean time he must excuse all the friends of real Christianity and Bible-religion, if they consider the great, learned; indefatigable, and inspired Apostle, as reasoning, on all occasions, most divinely and conclusively, and himself, as, very frequently, reasoning most sophistically and inconclusively.*

But to proceed:—After the foregoing most extraordinary declarations, we shall not be surprized at almost any thing this hardy gentleman can further advance. He informs the world that he has drawn his sword and thrown away the scabbard, consequently we may expect cutting and flashing work: and we shall not be disappointed in our expectations. I will, therefore, treat the Reader, if blasphemy against the Son of man and Spirit of God can be called a treat, with a few other specimens of his daring assertions:—

“The doctrine of the trinity and atonement,” says he, “are such as no miracles can prove.”† That these, however, are the doctrines of holy scripture has been sufficiently proved by many learned and excellent men. Dr. Priestley may deny, if he pleases,

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*Let the Reader who wishes to be more fully informed of the real character of this Apostle's writings consult Lord Littleton's “Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul,” where he will find a very different account from that of our learned Divine.

†Hist. of Cor. vol. 2. p. 461.—“The Platonic notion of the Divine essence enlarging itself to three hypostases, is considerable on these accounts:

pleases, that there is a sun in the firmament; but we shall continue, notwithstanding his perverseness, to believe with our forefathers the actual existence of that bright luminary, on which our all depends. Without Christ's divinity there can be no atonement, and without atonement for the sins of the world, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins. Infinitely more pious and consistent with truth are the sentiments

" 1. That it is delivered with so much assurance by the opposers of Christianity; such as Plotinus, Porphyrius, Proclus and others were known to be, and they speak with no manner of doubt concerning it; as may be seen in the passages of Porphyry preserved by St. Cyril¹ and others.

" 2. That they took it up from no revelation; but as a notion in itself agreeable enough; as appears by the passages in Plato and others concerning it. They never suspected it to be liable to the charge of nonsense, and contradictions, as our modern Unitarians charge the Trinity with; although their notion as represented by Porphyry be as liable to it. How came these men of wit and sense, to hit upon, and to be so fond of such absurd principles, which lead to the belief of mysterious nonsense, and impossibilities; if these men may be trusted?

" 3. That the nations most renowned for antiquity and deep speculations did light upon the same doctrine, about a Trinity of hypostases in the Divine essence. To prove this I shall not refer to the Trismegistic books, or the Chaldee oracles, or any doubtful authorities; but Plutarch asserts² the three Hypostases to have been received among the Persians, and Porphyry and Jamblicus say the same of the Egyptians..

" 4. That this hypostasis did maintain its reputation so long in the world. For we find it continued to the time of Macrobius, who mentions it as a reasonable notion, namely, of one Supreme Being, Father of all, and a Mind proceeding from it, and Soul from Mind."³

Stillingsfleet on the Trinity, p. 216.

¹Cyrl. c. Jul. l. 1. and l. 8.

²De Isid et Osirid. p. 369. ed. Tr.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. l. 3. c. 11.—Jamb. de Myst. sect. 8. c. 2.—³Macrobius in Som. Scip. l. 1, c. 14.

sentiments of the late pathetic Dr. Ogden. "Death," says this pleasing writer, "which God made not, took possession of the world, and guilt and pain have a large dominion in it; and might have stretched their empire to a dreadful extent, had not a person of Divine nature and attributes, united, in a manner incomprehensible, with the Supreme Father of all things, been pleased, by the Father's appointment, and out of his own incommunicable goodness, to interpose in our behalf.

"He came down from heaven; and still continuing to be one with the Supreme Nature, he assumed ours. He became man: he lived upon earth, did good, endured pain, preached piety and righteousness, worked wonders, suffered death as a malefactor, restored himself to life, returned to heaven, and now governs his church by the operation of yet another Divine person, who with him and the Father, is one God, blessed forever.

"All this, you seem to say, is strange and wonderful. It is so. The Divine existence, eternity, infinity, which yet reason obliges us to acknowledge, is very wonderful. The Divine government of the world, which we experience, is in many instances exceedingly astonishing. The world is filled with wonders; and if you attempt ignorantly to remove them, they become

"greater. If you deny what is strange, you must admit what is impossible."—Pious and just.

Again:—"As to the divinity of Christ, an ingenious man would easily find as many plausible arguments for the divinity of Moses."⁶

Let the serious Christian judge again whether this is not an assertion unworthy of any man of common integrity, much more of a man of Dr. Priestley's abilities and reputation.

Again:—"I conceive the doctrine of the Trinity to be a fundamental corruption of the religion which I profess, the greatest of those that mark the church of Rome."⁷

Again:—

³Ogden's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 146, 147.

⁴Letters to Dr. Geddes, p. 5.—"Nor is it to be wondered, that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty, which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance; *when even his Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniences of human nature, sin excepted.*"

Locke's Essay, b. 3. c. 9. s. 23.

⁵Letter to Mr. Pitt, p. 24.—"I do not deny," says Bishop Kidder, "but that some men have given such an account of the Trinity, as implies a contradiction; but this is not therefore chargeable upon the doctrine, as it is delivered in the scripture, and by the wiser Christians.—It is an easy thing for men to declare against this doctrine; but to shew the contradiction is impossible. Men of the greatest wit and learning, both Jews, and Christians, and Heathens also, have not been able to see the inconsistency of this doctrine with sound reason."

Demonstration of the Messiah, part 3. p. 127.

The very learned Cudworth is not less explicit:—"We shall conclude here with confidence," says he, "that the Christian Trinity, though there be very much of mystery in it; yet is there nothing at all of plain contradiction to the undoubted principles of human reason," Ibid.

Again:—"The divinity of Christ, original sin, predestination, and the atonement, deserve to be numbered among the grossest of all errors."

That the doctrine of the atonement by Christ is a scriptural doctrine may be very safely left to the judgement of the most ordinary Christian. Only let him read the Mosaic institution, the fifty third chapter of Isaiah, the ninth chapter of Daniel, the tenth chapter of John, the third chapter of Romans, the second chapter of St. John's first epistle, and the whole epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, with seriousness and candour, considering the whole as the word of God, and he will be in no danger of being

Every scheme of redemption that can be devised by mortals is replete with difficulties insolvable by the highest powers of human reason. Aware of this, the Deist rejects the whole of revelation as incredible. He considers not, that natural religion also is liable to objections equally insolvable. If therefore he wishes to act consistently he must not stop here: Atheism will be his dernier resort. —But—will atheism account for all the appearances of things? So far from it, that the difficulties are increased an hundred fold. We must, therefore, if we act a reasonable part, come back to Christianity; for here alone a wise man may find rest for the sole of his foot. But, of the schemes of redemption devised by men, and founded, on the word of God, which shall we embrace? for every one is confessedly attended with very serious difficulties. The schemes most in vogue have been three—the Arian—the Socinian—and the Trinitarian. It seems right to embrace that scheme which is most honourable for God—most safe for man—most agreeable to the divine word—and least encumbered with difficulties. The patrons of each contend in behalf of their own. I would wish to recommend the Reader to Dean Tucker's "Brief and Dispassionate View of the Difficulties attending the Trinitarian, Arian, and Socinian Systems;" where he will probably find some satisfaction on this profound and mysterious subject.

being seduced by the confident assertions of this learned man. He is constitutionally warm and sanguine, and in whatever he embarks, he embarks with all his might. Such a conduct would be greatly to his honour, if his understanding were clear, his judgment sound, and his views properly directed. This, however, cannot be the case, I think; because he was as dogmatical in his assertions, when his religious sentiments were the reverse to what they are at present, as he is now.* All cannot be true, therefore, that this gentleman is pleased to advance. His brother Timothy is equally as bold and rash an assertor in favour of absolute predestination and its concomitant doctrines, as the Doctor is for the mere humanity of Christ and its appendages. It is a curious circumstance, that the two zealous brothers should be moving heaven and earth to establish doctrines as opposite to each other as the two poles of the world. In contradiction, however, to the hasty assumptions of the learned Doctor, on the subject of Christ's atonement; I will produce the opinions of three persons, whom every one will allow to be as capable of judging as any human being may ever expect to be. The first is Milton, the second Grotius, and the third Tillotson. Milton thus sweetly sings:—

—“ Man disobeying,

“ Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins

“ Against the high supremacy of heaven;—

“ Die he or justice must; unless for him

“ Some

*See Letters to Dr. Horsley, preface, p. 7.

- " Some other able, and as willing, pay
- " The rigid Satisfaction, death for death.
- " Say, heav'nly pow'rs, where shall we find such love ?
- " And now without redemption all mankind
- " Must have been lost, adjudg'd to death and hell
- " By doom severe, had not the Son of God,
- " In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
- " His dearest mediation thus renew'd.
- " Behold *me* then, *me* for him, life for life,
- " I offer ; on *me* let thine anger fall.—
- " His words were ended but his meek aspect.
- " Silent yet spake, and breath'd immortal love.—
- " O thou in heav'n and earth the only peace
- " Found out for mankind under wrath—
- " His crimes make guilty all his sons ; thy merit
- " Imputed shall absolve them who renounce
- " Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
- " And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
- " Receive new life. So man, as is most just,
- " Shall satisfy for man, be judg'd, and die,
- " And dying rise, and rising with him raise
- " His brethren, ransom'd with his own dear life.
- " So heav'nly love shall out-do hellish hate,
- " Giving to death, and dying to redeem."

Grotius wrote a whole book upon the Satisfaction which Christ made for the sins of the world : a book which ought very seriously to be considered, before this great Christian doctrine, the foundation of all our hopes, is given up. This celebrated man closes that admirable work in the following very decisive manner:—"Whosoever taketh away

" the sacrifice of Christ, leaveth him no true priest-
 " hood, contrary to the manifest authority of scrip-
 " ture, which assigns unto Christ a priestly dignity
 " distinct from the prophetic and kingly offices.
 " Neither is this spoken in a figurative way, but
 " in a manner which is most true and real. For
 " the priesthood of Christ is opposed to the Levi-
 " tical priesthood, which was a true one, as a spe-
 " cies of the same kind, more perfect than another
 " species, which is said to be less perfect. Nor
 " could it be rightly inferred, that it was necessary
 " Christ should have somewhat to offer (Heb. 8.
 " 3.) unless from the reality of that priesthood to
 " which he was appointed. But indeed it is not to
 " be wondered, that those who deprive Christ of
 " his natural glory, the glory of his Deity, should
 " lessen also his offices, and refuse to acknowledge
 " the chief benefits he hath procured for us.

" To thee, Lord Jesus, as true God, as true Re-
 " deemer, as true priest, as true sacrifice for sin,
 " with the Father, and the Spirit, one God with
 " thee, be honour and glory."

The

" Let the learned Reader consult the whole book, which will richly
 reward his pains. See also his Annotations on Eph. 1. 7.—Consult
 moreover M. De Burigny's Life of Grotius, book 6. chap. 6. for
 a defence of Grotius from the charge of Socinianism.—Outram, *De*
Sacrificiis is likewise a work of great merit, and may be read with
 much advantage. He that wishes to form an impartial judgment
 on this very important subject should do it and himself the justice
 to read what the learned Crellius has written in reply to Grotius.
 Outram's book is a sort of rejoinder to Crellius' answer to Grotius,

The excellent Tillotson,* quoting at large Mat. 28. 28.—John 6. 51.—Ibid. 10. 11.—Ibid. 15. 12, 13.—Mat. 26. 28.—Rom. 5. 6.—1 Cor. 15. 3.—2 Cor. 5. 14, 15.—Eph. 1. 7.—Col. 1. 20, 21, 22.—1 Thes. 5. 9, 10.—Heb. 2. 9.—Ibid. 9. 11.—15.—Ibid. 9. 25.—28.—Ibid. 10. 11, 12.—1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.—Ibid. 2. 21, 24.—Ibid. 3. 18.—1 John 2. 1; 3.—Ibid. 3. 16.—Ibid. 4. 10.—Rev. 1. 5.—Ibid. 5. 9. adds—" From these and many " other texts, it seems to be very plain and evident, " that Christ died for our sins, and suffered in our " stead, and by the sacrifice of himself has made an " atonement for us, and reconciled us to God, and " hath paid a price and ransom for us; and by the " merit of his death hath purchased for us forgive- " ness of sins, and inheritance among them that are " sanctified. And I do not know any doctrine of " our religion, that is founded and established up- " on more and plainer texts, which cannot be un- " derstood in any other sense, without offering great " violence to the first and most obvious meaning " of them.

" I

and Sullingfleet on the Satisfaction of Christ is an answer to Crel-
lius.—Mr. Hey's " Short Defence of the Atonement," is a suffi-
cient Answer to every thing advanced by Dr. Priestley on the subject.

*The late very learned Dr. Jortin observes, " that amongst ma-
ny things which may be mentioned in favour of Tillotson, this
" should not be forgotten, that of those, who have passed their
" judgment upon him, there never was a son of absurdity, who
" did not dislike, or a sensible reader, who did not approve his writ-
ings."

“ I know the Socinians have framed evasions to
 “ all these texts, which I have not time now to
 “ produce and examine: nor would it be worth
 “ the while. I shall only say this to them in gene-
 “ ral, that there is no principle of religion so plain-
 “ ly laid down in the whole scripture, but may be
 “ overthrown by the same, or the like evasions.
 “ Suppose Christ had died in our stead, and made
 “ satisfaction for sin, and God had intended to de-
 “ clare so much to us; in what plainer, and more
 “ express, and proper words could he have done it,
 “ than the scripture hath already done? If God had
 “ said in the scripture expressly, that Christ had
 “ *died in our room and stead, and had satisfied for our*
 “ *sins*; these very expressions, by the same arts of
 “ interpretation, might have been strained and
 “ wrested to some other sense. So that if God did
 “ not intend to express to us by these texts, that
 “ *Christ satisfied for the sins of men*, yet they are so
 “ obvious to be interpreted to that sense, and so
 “ hardly, if at all, capable of any other, that we can-
 “ not imagine, without a great reflection upon the
 “ wisdom of God, that he should deliver his mind
 “ to men in words and expressions so exceedingly
 “ liable to a quite different sense from what he in-
 “ tended. Besides that there is nothing more un-
 “ reasonable, than to deny that to be the meaning
 “ of scripture, which if it had been the meaning,
 “ could not have been expressed in plainer and more
 “ advantageous

“ advantageous words; especially when this is
“ done, not in one or two texts, but very many;
“ and not by one form of expression, but several,
“ and all inclining to the same sense; and, which is
“ worst of all, this violence is offered to scripture
“ in a matter which does neither contradict other
“ texts of scripture, nor the reason of mankind,
“ namely, that one man should suffer in another’s
“ stead, and make satisfaction for the crimes and
“ faults which another hath committed; supposing
“ the party offended be willing to accept of the
“ commutation, and the party that suffers in ano-
“ ther’s stead do voluntarily do it.*”

Thus far this most sensible and learned Arch-
bishop. Let us now proceed with Dr. Priestley’s
Philippics against Christ and the truths of his
gospel.

“ The divinity of Christ” says he again, “ is an
“ impious doctrine—it is a great corruption of
Christianity—a shocking corruption of genuine
“ Christianity—a most absurd and impious doctrine
“ —a radical corruption of Christianity.”

Again:—“ The doctrine of the Trinity is a
“ masterpiece of all the absurdities that ever were
“ invented—men of plain understandings never do
“ believe any such thing—It is a monstrous doc-
“ trine—It is one of the most odious and absurd
“ doctrines

“doctrines that ever was imposed on mankind, di-
 “rectly contrary to natural and revealed religion,
 “and to all the rational faculties God has given us
 “—It is an absurd and horrid doctrine’—The
 “Trinity and transubstantiation are both alike irra-
 “tional, unscriptural, and unnatural, utterly contra-
 “ry to all good sense and reason—And, as to the
 “Trinitarians, nothing is more plain than that they
 “feed upon ashes; *a deceived heart hath turned*
 “*them aside*, because they will not make use of
 “those rational faculties, which God hath given
 “them; nor say, *Is there not a lie in my right*
 “*hand?*”

Again:

Expressions like these concerning the Great Unknown ill be-
 come poor frail mortals. Dr. Priestley, with all his *unseemly confi-*
dence, philosopher as he is, knows little more of the Deity's mode
 of existence than the most simple ploughman, who is competently
 versed in his bible. Modest terms would therefore become him
 well. Men with minds, *truly liberal and enlarged*, never use lan-
 guage like the above. Besides, does he not know, that some of
 the greatest and best of human beings have ever been of opinion that
 the Godhead does really admit of distinctions something like to what
 we call a Trinity? Does he not himself grant, that the holy scrip-
 tures *seem*, at least, to contain such a doctrine? Was he not formerly
 himself of the same opinion? Whence then all these rash and in-
 temperate exclamations? Did ever *wild enthusiast*, upon topics the
 most absurd, advance any thing more positive and indecent? What if
 Dr. Priestley does conceive that he sees reason to reject the doc-
 trine of *three hypostases* in the divine Unity? Let him reject it: and
 let him inculcate with all plainness what he conceives to be the
 truth. But yet let him reflect that he is but a man; that he is en-
 compassed with darkness and infirmity; that he is naturally warm
 and hasty in his conclusions; that the subject he determines on,
 with so much audacious assurance, is awfully deep; that many
 great and good men, of every denomination and description, have

¹See Remarks on Primitive Candour, p. 100.

Again:—"The merits of Christ is a Popish invention. It is impossible Christ should make satisfaction

embraced, with as great confidence as he rejects, what he calls, this "absurd and horrid doctrine;" that Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and all their followers, long before our Saviour's time, entertained sentiments somewhat similar; that—but I stop, and close these remarks upon the *ridiculous rashness of the learned Doctor with the just reproof of the more learned Cudworth*;—"Besides," says this very skilful Divine, "this advantage from the ancient Pagan Platonists and Pythagoreans, admitting a Trinity into their theology, in like manner as Christianity doth (whereby Christianity was the more recommended to the philosophic Pagans) there is another advantage of the same, extending even to this present time, probably not unintended also, by divine providence: that *whereas bold and conceited wits, precipitantly condemning the doctrine of the Trinity for nonsense, absolute repugnancy to human faculties, and impossibility*, have thereupon some of them quite shaken off Christianity, and all revealed religion, professing only theism; others have frustrated the design thereof by paganizing it into creature worship, or idolatry. This ignorant and conceited confidence of both may be retunded and confuted from hence, because the most ingenious and acute of all the Pagan philosophers, the Platonists and Pythagoreans, who had no bias at all upon them, nor any scripture revelation, which might seem to impose upon their faculties; but followed the free sentiments and dictates of their own minds, did, notwithstanding, not only entertain this Trinity of divine hypostases *eternal and uncreated*, but were also fond of the hypothesis, and made it a main fundamental of their theology."

Cudworth's True Intellectual System, from Kidder, part 3. p. 127.

Dr. Trapp justly observes that the Trinity is as intelligible as omnipresence, eternity, God's simplicity, self-existence, and the like; and that the Three and One are much more easy to be reconciled than foreknowledge in God and free-agency in man.

Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 7.

"The Socinians," says father Malebranche, "cannot comprehend the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation: and this suffices not only to their disbelieving it, but also to their affirming of those that do believe it, in an arrogant and libertine way, that they are born to slavery."

Search after Truth, c. 2. b. 3.

"satisfaction" unto God for us."—The merits and satisfaction of Christ, we grant, are impossible upon the hypothesis, that he is a *mere* man. But upon our scriptural scheme, that he is God as well as man, they are not only possible, but even highly reasonable. The Doctor should not be so magisterial in his tone. Other people have got reason and discernment as well as himself. Deeper thinkers than he, and men of more enlarged minds, have been of a very different opinion. "We agree with our adversaries about the authority of reason," says a great man; "but we dissent about the

"Expiatory sacrifices were in use from the earliest times, and were expressly required by Almighty God of the nation of the Jews. This Divine person (Christ) therefore, that he might have somewhat much more valuable to offer, assumed a body that was prepared for him, and offered himself as a Lamb without spot to God. He had no sins of his own to expiate: but, regardless of pleasure, ease, and life, and moved by the most exalted devotion to God, and unbounded charity to man, he gave his side to the spear, he stretched out his arms upon the cross: and made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

Dr. Ogden's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 183.—If the Reader is a stranger to these Discourses he has a pleasure to come in the perusal of them. They contain a pleasing defence of all the leading doctrines of the gospel.

The celebrated Dr. South speaks of the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ as a fundamental of Christianity. "I for my part," says he, "cannot look upon any thing as a more fundamental article of the Christian religion than Christ's satisfaction for sin, by which alone the lost sons of Adam are reconciled to their offended God, and so put into new capacities of salvation."

Sermons, vol. 3. p. 271.

“ the exercise of it, and the bounds of its jurisdiction. We believe even the abstrusest mysteries of the Christian religion; of which mysteries perhaps we can assign no reasons, but for our belief we assign a good one; because they are plainly taught in the word of God, who can neither err nor deceive. And this we affirm to be a reasonable conclusion, though it carry us even to the confines of heaven, beyond the limits of reason.”

Again: — “ If the doctrine of atonement be true, it cannot, however, be pretended that David, or any other pious person in the Old Testament, was at all acquainted with it; and therefore the belief of it cannot be necessary to salvation, or indeed of much consequence.” If assertions were proofs the business would be settled, and the doctrine of atonement must be discarded forever. But as this is not the case, I will take the liberty of directing the Reader again for an answer to the above declaration to the twenty second chapter of Genesis, the twelfth and twenty ninth chapters of Exodus, the nine first, the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters of Leviticus, the twenty eight and twenty ninth chapters of Numbers, the twenty second, fortieth, and sixty ninth psalms, the fifty second and fifty third chapters of Isaiah, and the ninth chapter

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of

*Dr. Bentley's Sermons, p. 312.

†Hist. of Cor. vol. 1. p. 158.—See a good illustration and defence of the doctrine of Christ's atonement in Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Dialogues the 3d. and 4th.

of Daniel. Let any serious man, I say, read all these chapters, comparing them with St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, and other parts of the New Testament, and then let him persist in the opinion of Dr. Priestley, if he can, that David and other pious persons of the Old Testament were totally unacquainted with the doctrine of atonement.* May we not ask the learned Gentleman too, whether a strict observance of the Jewish sacrifices was not of great consequence to those who lived under that dispensation? What would have been the consequence if David and other pious persons had neglected the morning and evening sacrifice, the celebration of the passover, or the annual feast of expiation? Dr. Priestley

*The savage inhabitants of Madagascar use sacrifices whenever they would supplicate the Deity in their distresses. Mr. Ives, in his Travels through Persia, observes upon this custom of theirs, that "he saw many circumstances in the Madagascarian sacrifices, so exactly resembling those which are mentioned in the Old Testament as offered up by the Jews, that he could not turn his thoughts back to the original without being sensibly struck at the exactness of the copy." Ives' Voyage, p. 16.

The writings of Homer, Virgil, and other ancient Heathen authors, it is well known, abound greatly with descriptions of sacrificial rites. Indeed their religion consisted almost wholly in them. The same custom prevails among the American Indians at this day. See Edwards' Life of David Brainerd, p. 353 for the description of a curious ceremony of this sort.

*Milton calls the Jewish ceremonies,

— "Religious rites

"Of sacrifice; informing men, by types

"And shadows, of that destin'd seed to bruise

"The serpent, by what means he shall achieve

"Mankind's deliverance." P. L. h. 12. l. 231—234.

Priestley must allow, that the observance of these atoning rites was of much consequence to them, and that no person under that dispensation could be esteemed a pious person without such observance. Not only their well-being, but their very existence depended upon it. Of equal importance, in our opinion, is the doctrine of Christ's atonement, under the Christian dispensation. For if *he that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*

Again:—"Christ went through the scene of his trial and crucifixion with wonderful composure, and without the least appearance of any thing like agony of mind."—"One should suppose it were impossible that Dr. Priestley could be serious in such a declaration as this; seeing it is contrary to the clearest evidence, and the plainest matter of fact. Let the Reader however consult psalms the twenty second and sixty ninth, Isaiah the fifty third, Matthew the twenty sixth and twenty seventh, and Hebrews the fifth, and then judge for himself what truth there is in the above assertion.

Again:—"According to the plain general tenor of scripture, the pardon of sin, is in reality, always

“ always dispensed by the free mercy of God, on
 “ account of men’s personal virtue, a penitent up-
 “ right heart, and a reformed exemplary life, with-
 “ out regard to the sufferings, or merit, of any be-
 “ ing whatever.”

It is evident from the general prevalence of sa-
 crifices in all ages and nations, that the sense of
 mankind has ever been the reverse of Dr. Priest-
 ley’s assertion. And since the beginning of the
 world has it not been known, that ever one single
 sin was pardoned, but with an eye to the all-atoning
 oblation. For the offers of pardon and salvation
 are made in scripture to those only that repent and
 return to God, for the sake of what Christ has done
 and suffered, in whom they are therefore declared
 to be accepted by God, and to whom they are here-
 upon taught to ascribe the glory of their salvation.
 Let the serious Reader, who believes the declarati-
 ons of holy scripture, carefully peruse the following
 passages, and judge.—John 3. 14—17.—Acts 10.
 33, 36, 43.—Ibid. 2. 38.—Ibid. 3. 18, 19.—Rom.
 4. 25.—2 Cor. 5. 18—21.—Eph. 1. 5—7.—Col.
 1. 20—22.—Heb. 1. 3.—Ibid. 9. 14.—Ibid. 10.
 4—10, 14.—Rev. 1. 5, 6.—Ibid. 5. 9, 10.—Ibid.
 7. 13—15.

Reject the doctrine of atonement, and all these
 declarations of scripture, with many more to the
 same

same purpose, not only loose all their propriety, but become unnatural and absurd.

Dr. Priestley, I well know, may produce the fifteenth psalm, and other such like excellent moral passages from the Old Testament, in favour of the above position. But then, let the Reader recollect, that no Jew could answer the description given in that psalm, who was not conscientious, at the same time, in the regular discharge of all the sacrificial rites of the Mosaic œconomy. Dr. Priestley is not at liberty to select the moral parts of the Old and New Testament, and set them in opposition to the ceremonial. He must take the whole together as one grand, comprehensive, and finished system of religion. A contrary conduct has been the bane of the church in all ages. Philosophers should act philosophically.

Again:—"The Word of God, and the Spirit of God, are not distinct persons from God, but the power of God, and the energy of God."

It is not easy to express one's abhorrence of this declaration in decent language. The existence of

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* See Priestley's Appeal, and Elwall's Trial, as published by him, passim, for all the above quotations where there is no particular reference.—This modern Socinian hath, in all these blasphemous expressions, trodden pretty much in the footsteps of his predecessors in the same good cause. Their terms are such as these:—"Deus tripersonatus—idolum portentosum—figmentum Satanæ—Anti-christi Cerberus—triceps Geryon—idolum trifrons—monstrum triforme—deus incognitus, ideoque procul rejiciendus, et Satanæ conditori suo restituendus."

Browne's Discourse on the Trinity, p. 178.

his Saviour and Sanctifier, he annihilates with one stroke of his pen. May not the Redeemer say to him as he did to a brother of his in times of old, Priestley, Priestley, *why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*—A sufficient answer to the Doctor's impious assertion are the words of Christ himself—*Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* That is, according to Dr. Priestley's mode of interpretation, baptizing them in the name of God, and of his power, and of his energy.—Is there any thing in the doctrine of the holy Trinity equally absurd with this? And yet this is the man who pretends all the world is in the dark but himself and a few friends who embrace similar absurdities,

Candid Reader! I appeal to thy judgment again. Would not any sober-minded man be all amazement to hear Dr. Priestley make use of such language as is contained in the above intemperate, indecent, and unphilosophical assertions? He well knows that the whole Christian world, for many centuries, have embraced the doctrines of Christ's divinity and atonement.* Men of all descriptions have

* "The divinity of Jesus," says an able living author, "I conceive to be the chief corner stone in the edifice of Christianity. Remove this from the building and the whole fabric immediately totters, the foundation is shaken to the very centre. There appears at once an evident disproportion between the end and the means, the importance of the object proposed, and the person by

have considered them, not only as important, but even as essential to salvation. And, surely, when men like Milton, Grotius, and Tillotson, besides many others that might be named, have coolly and decidedly espoused these doctrines as the undoubted truths of God, if we must dissent from them, if the light of our minds does constrain us to think in a different channel, we ought at least to express our disagreement with modesty and diffidence. Dr. Priestley will find no difficulty in allowing, that there is, speaking moderately, some appearance of these doctrines in holy scripture. These truly great, pious, and learned men have been clearly of opinion they are actually contained therein. He himself saw, or thought he saw them there in times of yore. And if at present he is of a different opinion, he will express that opinion with caution and reserve; and still retain a respect for the judgment of those great men from whom he cannot now but differ.—But no—They are all fools and blockheads who embrace the orthodox system. “Christ is a mere man”—pardon me, gentle Reader! for repeating

“whom it was accomplished. And then the great doctrine of atonement and expiation, by the blood of its Author, falls to the ground, and all the rich promises of the gospel are done away.”—Again:—“The divinity of Jesus is so conspicuous a feature in the gospel, and is supported by evidences which press upon us so closely on every side, that I flatter myself, there is not any one point of Christ’s religion more capable of being clearly proved and ascertained, than his claim to a divine nature.”

Hawker’s Sermons, p. 8, 40.

ing the odious tale—" like ourselves; the legitimate son of Joseph and Mary ;' capable of misapplying the scriptures of the Old Testament; naturally fallible, peccable, weak, like other men; liable to sin, as well as subject to error: neither is there any thing so very different in the occasion or manner of his death, from that of others who suffered and died after him in the cause of Christianity, but that their sufferings and deaths may be considered in the same light with his.— Moses has given us a very lame account of the creation and fall of man.—Solomon wrote without any inspiration.—David's psalms contain no predictions of the Messiah.—The Prophets fell into great mistakes—the Apostles did the same. The miraculous conception is an incumbrance on the Christian scheme:—St. Luke's account of it abounds with the most manifest improbabilities.—It is evident the Apostles often applied the scriptures very improperly, and with no better judgment than their unbelieving countrymen.— The apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively.— He has strained very much by the force of imagination to reconcile the Jews to the Christian religion.—The writings of this Apostle abound with analogies and antitheses on which no very serious stress can be laid.—The Apostles have
" disguised

* See an able defence of the miraculous conception in Hawker's Sermons, p. 150—164.

“disguised the simple religion of Christ.”—If all these things were strictly true, there might have been no harm in Dr. Priestley’s telling the world so, in a proper and becoming manner, even though he should incur the displeasure of all the learned around him. He might suppose the interest of truth required such a conduct from him. But then, why all this air of superiority and disdain? Why treat the religion of his country, and the opinions of the learned in all ages and nations with such sovereign contempt? Has the opinion of a Milton, a Grotius, or a Tillotson, no weight in the scale against this mighty man?—Let us hear the gentleman once more:—“The doctrine of the Trinity and atone-
 “ment are such as no miracles can prove.—An in-
 “genious man will easily find as many plausible
 “arguments for the divinity of Moses as of Christ.—
 “The doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental cor-
 “ruption of Christianity, the greatest of those cor-
 “ruptions that mark the church of Rome.—The
 “divinity of Christ and the atonement deserve to
 “be numbered among the grossest of all errors.—

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“I know nothing more dangerous,” says the celebrated Neck-
 er, than the inconsiderate censures of those religious ceremonies
 “received and respected in the country where we live. Some
 “do not think that they are acting wrong when they speak slighting-
 “ly of the various symbols of public worship; yet, if they attentive-
 “ly observed the kind of minds, and the first habits of the greater
 “part of those to whom they address such discourses, they would
 “know how easy it is to wound them in the sentiment, which is the
 “source of all their tranquillity and the safe-guard of their moral
 “conduct.”

Importance of religious Opinions, chap. 15.

" The divinity of Christ is an impious doctrine—
 " it is a great corruption of Christianity—a shock-
 " ing corruption of genuine Christianity—a most
 " absurd and impious doctrine—a radical corrupti-
 " on of Christianity.—The merits of Christ is a
 " Popish invention.—It was impossible Christ
 " should make satisfaction unto God for us.—The
 " doctrine of the Trinity is a masterpiece of all the
 " absurdities that ever were invented.—It is a
 " monstrous doctrine.—It is one of the most odi-
 " ous and absurd doctrines that ever was imposed
 " on mankind.—It is an absurd and horrid doc-
 " trine; irrational, unscriptural, unnatural, and ut-
 " terly contrary to all good sense and reason.—Christ
 " went through the scene of his trial without the least
 " appearance of any thing like agony of mind.—
 " Nopious person under the Old Testament was at
 " all acquainted with the atonement.—Pardon of sin
 " is always granted without regard to the sufferings
 " or merit of any being whatever.* —The Word
 " and Spirit of God are only his power and energy,
 " and not distinct persons.—Nothing is more plain
 " than that all the Trinitarians are under a strong
 " delusion."

One would suppose, from these declarations, that
 this learned man was deputed the oracle of the
 Christian

*See a good account and defence of the doctrine of the atone-
 ment in the excellent Sermons of the Rev. Robert Hawker, just
 published, p. 222—232.

Christian world; that the Almighty had bestowed upon him an inquisitorial spirit to correct all former misconceptions; and that all who have been esteemed great and learned before, are now no more to be accounted of. Dr. Priestley is the man; and all our Miltons, Grotiuses, Tillotsons, and even Clarkes must bow before him.

Let the intelligent Reader consider well the above declarations of this dogmatical Divine, and then ask himself—Where is the candour, modesty, humility, and other virtues, which constitute and adorn the saintly character, to be discovered? Moses and the Prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the atonement for sin by the death of the Son of God, together with all the great and learned defenders thereof in every age, are treated with equal indignity. But—I check myself. The Reader will weigh seriously the tendency of all these expressions, and then judge whether it be the Trinitarians, or the learned Doctor, who are under a strong delusion. To our own Master, however, we must each of us stand or fall. Dr. Priestley ought, nevertheless, to suspect, that there is a *possibility* of his being mistaken; and that other men may have understandings as strong and as clear as his own, with an equal share of sincerity, and an equal degree of love to the pure and unmixed truths of the gospel of Christ. At all events, rashness

ness and enthusiastic zeal for the shibboleths of a party are unbecoming the character of any man, who has the smallest pretensions either to sound religion or philosophy.

SECTION IX.

IN further answer to all these fanatical assertions,* I will oppose here, the sober and solemn declarations of a few truly learned and valuable persons, Dr. Priestley himself being judge. They speak a language diametrically opposite to the above of his, and, as it appears to me, in a spirit essentially different. The language of Dr. Priestley is rash, haughty, confident, intemperate, indecent, enthusiastic; the language of the following witnesses to the catholic truths of God's word, is firm, modest, diffident, and worthy of men who are delivering their opinions upon a subject, of all others the most profound. *The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will be learn his way.* The Reader will compare the *spirit* of the foregoing declarations

* Dr. Priestley is in England what the Jacobin levellers are in France. And were he properly supported he would play us the same game. His principles both religious and political bear a near resemblance. The fanaticism of these people may be clearly seen by the reception they gave the Doctor's son, and grows more and more conspicuous daily. Every true Englishman would sincerely rejoice at the emancipation of that great people; but it is exquisitely painful to see them plunging into so many of the fooleries of the German Anabaptists, whose conduct is recorded in the beginning of these Strictures.

clarations of Dr. Priestley with that of these that follow, and judge. I desire nothing from him but a fair and sober determination.

The very learned and pious Bishop Bull speaks thus:—"I own freely I may be mistaken, but I deny that I intended to deceive any one. I am fully persuaded, and that upon mature consideration, of that which I have endeavoured to prove to others; namely, that all the approved fathers and doctors of the church, to a man, who were before the council of Nice, even from the days of the Apostles, taught the very same thing, although sometimes, perhaps, in other words, and another manner of speaking, which the Nicene fathers determined concerning the Son's divinity, against Arius and other heretics."

That eminently skilful and profound Divine Dr. Barrow, speaks thus:—"That there is one divine nature or essence, common unto three persons incomprehensibly united, and ineffably distinguished; united in essential attributes, distinguished by peculiar idioms and relations; all equally infinite in every divine perfection, each different from other in order and manner of subsistence; that there is a mutual inexistence of one in all, and all in one; a communication without any deprivation or diminution in the communicant; an

¹Defen: Fid. Nic. apud. Pref. ad Lect.

" an eternal generation, and an eternal procession
 " without precedence or succession, without pro-
 " per causality or dependence; a Father imparting
 " his own, and the Son receiving his Father's life,
 " and a Spirit issuing from both, without any divisi-
 " on, or multiplication of essence; these are noti-
 " ons which may well puzzle our reason in con-
 " ceiving how they agree, but should not stagger our
 " faith in asserting that they are true; upon which
 " we should meditate, not with hope to compre-
 " hend, but with disposition to admire, veiling our
 " faces in the presence, and prostrating our reason
 " at the feet of wisdom so far transcending us."

Nay, even Dr. Clarke, who has usually been con-
 sidered as not perfectly orthodox on the subject of
 our Saviour's divinity, yet insists on the necessity
 and reasonableness of the doctrine of Christ's atone-
 ment, and calls it " the main and fundamental article
 " of the Christian faith."—" It is therefore," adds
 he a little afterwards, " plainly agreeable to right
 " reason to believe that God, in vindication of the
 " honour of his laws, and for a testimony of his
 " hatred against sin, should appoint some sacrifice
 " or expiation for sin, at the same time that he
 " forgives the sinner upon his true repentance."

Mr.

⁶Defence of the Trinity, p. 7. 8.

⁷Discourse on the Being and Attributes of God, part 2. p. 194.
 195.—Chevalier Ramsay in his Discourse of the Theology of the

Mr. Locke likewise tells us, "that it is very hard
" for a Christian, who reads the scripture with at-
" tention, and an unprejudiced mind, to deny the
" satisfaction of Christ."

The late excellent Bishop of Norwich is not less
positive upon this subject than either of the former:
—"I declare before God," says he, "in the sincer-
" ity of my soul, upon the best judgment I can
" form, I am verily persuaded, that the doctrine
" of our Lord's divinity is really the doctrine of
" the scriptures, and of the primitive church.—In
" this faith I propose to live, and for this faith, if
K " called

Pagans tells us, that "in order to silence the incredulous, and
" make the mystery of the Trinity intelligible to them, a famous
" Doctor of the church of England (Dr. Clarke) and, as I am
" assured, the greatest Philosopher of modern times (Sir Isaac
" Newton) believed that it would do no prejudice to the faith, to
" consider the three persons of the Trinity as three individual
" agents, or three distinct beings, though of the same substance.
" This opinion is as far above Arianism, as Arianism is above So-
" cinianism. Fausto-Socini maintained, that the Son had never
" any existence before the incarnation. Arius held, that he was
" created or produced out of nothing like finite beings, but yet
" from all eternity, that is, before all time. The learned Dr.
" Clarke maintains every where, that the Word is not a creature,
" but an emanation from the Father, co-eternal and consubstantial;
" that this emanation is as essential to the Deity as his veracity;
" that it is not possible for the Father to be without the Son, in
" any other sense than it is possible for God to lie; and conse-
" quently, that the Word is not a precarious being which God
" may annihilate."

This is the view which this learned Foreigner gives of the senti-
ments of Dr. Clarke. How far it is just, or otherwise, I undertake
not to determine.

“ called upon, I shall, I humbly trust, be prepared
“ to die.”^a

To these we may add the solemn declaration of a most learned Foreigner, the celebrated Michaelis, Professor at the university of Gottingen in Germany:—“ I profess before God,” says he, “ and upon the word of an honest man, that I believe
“ Christ to be true and eternal God and the Jehovah.—It is a truth infinitely dear to me.”^b

To these six attestations I will add those of two or three other gentlemen of rank and learning indisputable:—Sir Francis Bacon says, speaking on the same subject, “ I believe, that in the fulness of
“ time, according to the promise and oath, of a
“ chosen lineage, descended the blessed seed of the
“ woman, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of
“ God, and Saviour of the world; who was conceived by the power and overshadowing of the
“ Holy Ghost, and took flesh of the Virgin Mary
“ —so that the eternal Son of God, and the ever-blessed Son of Mary, was one person.”^c

The late Soame Jenyns, Esq. was for many years an avowed deist, and is well known to have been a man of considerable talents. By some means, he was convinced of his error, became a Christian; and wrote in defence of the gospel. He,
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^aTwo Sermons on the Faith and Trinity, p. 30, 31.

^bLectures on the New Testament, sect. 151.

^cConfession of Faith.

one, should suppose, would be a fair and impart judge of the contents of the New Testament. When then was his opinion of these doctrines again which Dr. Priestley makes such a lamentable outcry, but which the great body of the Christian world consider as the foundation of all our future hopes? Speaking of the Trinity he says—"That there "subsists some such union in the Divine nature, "the whole tenour of the New Testament seems "to express, and it was so understood in the earliest ages."

And a little after, speaking of the atonement which Christ made for the sins of the world upon the cross, he says;—"That Christ suffered and "died as an atonement for the sins of mankind, is "a doctrine so constantly and so strongly enforced "through every part of the New Testament, that "whoever will seriously peruse those writings, and "deny that it is there, may with as much reason "and truth, after reading the works of Thucydides and Livy, assert, that in them no mention is "made of any facts, relative to the histories of "Greece and Rome."

The late Lord President Forbes also, who was a man of very considerable attainments, assures us,

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"the

*View of the internal Evidence of the Christian Religion,

8th. ed. by J. P. 27. 13. edition.

**Ibid. p. 29.—See also some fine reasonings upon these subjects in the same little work, p. 159—170.

“ the gospel informs, precisely and formally, that
 “ though the Godhead is essentially one, yet there
 “ are in the Divine Essence three persons, equal in
 “ perfection, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
 “ Spirit: that the Son, to satisfy essential justice,
 “ took on him flesh, was united to the humanity,
 “ suffered for sinners, made atonement for them,
 “ raised the man to whom he was joined, from the
 “ dead, glorified him with himself, and is to make
 “ continual intercession for sinners.—That this is
 “ true, every Christian believes.”

SECTION X.

THE Reader will now compare these most respectable testimonies with the preceding assertions of Dr. Priestley, and judge for himself concerning both one and the other. In the mean time we will go a little farther with the learned gentleman's bold assumptions:—“ He doubts
 “ whether there be any such extraordinary being as
 “ the devil—is clear our Saviour did not believe
 “ the existence of evil spirits” —rejects whole verses, and even whole chapters in the bible, when they make against his favourite opinions!—

¹Thoughts concerning religion, p. 139.

²Letters to Dr. Price, p. 163.

³Disquis. on Mat. and Spirit, vol. 1. p. 168.

⁴Hist. of Cor. vol. 2. p. 368.—Dr. Priestley assures us (if we will take his ipse dixit for the truth of the declaration, which, thank God, we have no need to do, seeing we have the bible in our hands)

is positive that "the doctrine of a soul has no foundation in reason, or the scriptures"—assures

us

hands, and are possessed of common sense and common learning as well as he) that the New Testament contains no such doctrines as those of the Trinity and Divinity of Christ. But that the Doctor is mistaken upon this, as well as upon many other occasions, notwithstanding all his real merit (which I am as willing to allow as any man) is pretty evident, because both the Jews, Mahometans, and many of his own Socinian brethren, are of a different opinion; the Jews declaring those doctrines *are* in the New Testament, while the Mahometans and Socinians insist they were *not* there originally, but have been foisted in since by the Trinitarians. Upon this principle Enjedinus, the Socinian, rejects the whole epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, as apocryphal. He found himself, like Alexander, unable to loose the Gordian knots, which it contains, and therefore, like him also, he took his critical sword and cut them without fear: he rejected the whole. Another of these gentry, dissatisfied with Socinus's exposition of the introductory verses of St. John's gospel (and what sober critic can be satisfied with it?) rejects the whole passage as spurious. Sommerus and Francis David reject the whole book of Proverbs, as apocryphal, because it ascribes a Son to God. And Dr. Priestley himself, not approving the miraculous conception, rejects the two first chapters of St. Matthew's gospel, and the two first of St. Luke's. —We may say, however, with confidence and triumph, in the words of the learned Jortin, that "the books of the New Testament have descended to us uncorrupted in any thing material. This appears evidently from the quotations which have been made out of them by Christian writers in all ages—from the high esteem and veneration in which they have ever been held—from the multitude of copies and early translations, which left no room for fraud or inattention to do them any important injury—and from the various readings themselves, which, for the most part, are of small consequence."

Discourses on the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 198.

*Letters to Dr. Horne, &c. p. 72.—More able men than Dr. Priestley are of a very different opinion. Dr. Jortin, for instance, among many others, is decidedly an advocate for the reality of a human soul. "Man, is an immortal creature. So say both reason and revelation; they mutually agree in asserting this important truth, and twist a twofold cord which is not to be broken."—Sermons, vol. 6. p. 204.—See the whole of that excel-

*See Allix's Judgment, p. 426—430.

us "none of the ancient prophecies give us any
 "reason to expect more than a mere man in the
 "Messiah"³—declares that "the Apostles never
 "taught any other"⁴—that Jesus "Christ is never
 "once called God in all the New Testament, not
 "even

lent discourse.—See also the second of Dr. Bentley's admirable Sermons at Boyle's Lecture, where all that Dr. Priestley and our other Materialists can advance against the immateriality of the soul is amply and ably refuted.—Consult likewise Wollaston's Religion of Nature, sect. 9.—Bishop Butler's Analogy, part 1. ch. 1.—Dr. Clarke's Discourse on the Being and Attributes of God, part 1. page 75, and part 2. page 113—121.—And Dean Sherlock's Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul, where all Dr. Priestley's flimsy arguments are completely refuted and overthrown. The learned Dean justly observes, that "a Christian, who believes the gospel, is in no danger of the philosophy of infidels; for the authority of God is above all reason and philosophy; but if we set aside revelation, and dispute with them upon equal terms, the event is doubtful.—All such disputes are a trial of skill between man and man, and their personal abilities and qualifications: and if an infidel happen to be a wittier man, and better philosopher, than a Christian, the victory is like to go on that side; and the Christian who lays aside his faith may be baffled in his philosophy, and that too often endangers the renouncing his faith." Chap. 1. sect. 1.

This learned Divine very properly resolves all the great doctrines of religion into the will of God, as revealed in holy scripture. He does not reject the arguments from nature and philosophy, but he wisely refuses to rest the cause upon them. "Thus saith the Lord"—"thus saith the Redeemer of souls"—or "thus saith St. Paul"—is infinitely preferable to the vague, and, too often, sophistical reasonings of vain philosophers, and conceited dabblers in science, *falsely so called*. And, to apply the observation to the case in hand, I would observe, that there are three single passages in the New Testament, which subvert most completely every thing that Dr. Priestley has laboured to establish, on the materiality of the soul, in his "Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit."—These three passages are—Mat. 10. 28.—Luke 16. 19—31.—Ibid. 9. 28—36.—No man can *fairly* resist this evidence.

³Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, vol. 1. p. 361.

⁴History of Corruptions, vol. 1. p. 6.

“ even in the lowest sense of all ”; —that “ we find
 “ nothing like divinity ascribed unto him before
 “ the time of Justin Martyr,” who suffered for the
 faith in the year of our Lord 167^e—that Irenæus
 never charges the Ebionites as heretics, but only
 K 4 expresse

• Letters to Burn, p. 7.—Dr. Price might well say to his friend,
 when speaking of the Socinian interpretations of scripture, “ I must
 “ own to you, that I am inclined to wonder that good men can sa-
 tisfy themselves with such explanations.”

Sermons, p. 135.

How different to these three last assertions of this learned man
 are the declarations of Dr. Clark and Mr. Whiston? The former
 says, in his Reply to the Objections of Robert Nelson, Esq.—“ The
 “ Son is, by communication of Divine power and dominion from
 “ the Father, *really and truly God.*” Page 50.

Again:—“ He is really and truly God.” Page 52.

Again:—“ The Son is true God, by communication of divinity
 “ from the Father.” Page 62.

Again:—“ That the Father’s being, by way of eminence, the
 “ one God, does not exclude the Son from being truly God, by
 “ true communication of divinity from that one unoriginated God
 “ the Father, I readily acknowledge.” Page 69.

Again:—“ Christ is truly God, because he has true divinity
 “ derived to him from the Father.—He is truly good, by having
 “ the Father’s goodness communicated to him without measure.”
 Page 91.

Again:—“ Irenæus very justly styles Christ true God, and truly
 “ God,—by having received from his Father true divinity and
 “ dominion over the whole creation.” Page 106.

And again:—“ Christ is by nature truly God; as truly, as
 “ man is by nature truly man.” Page 81.

The latter, in his Council of Nice vindicated from the Athana-
 sian Herefy, says, “ Jesus Christ is truly God and Lord.—This
 “ Christian article is agreed to by all the three parties, Eusebians,
 “ Athanasians, and Arians; as also that he is a God by nature,
 “ and was such before his incarnation, nay, before the creation of
 “ the world; and not only by office, or appointment afterwards,
 “ as the old Ebionites and modern Socinians have been forced to
 “ affirm.”—Page 8.

• Hist. of Cor. vol. 1. p. 32.

expresses a great dislike of them¹—that the genuineness of our present copies of the Epistles of St. Ignatius “is not only very much doubted, but “generally given up by the learned”²—that “no “critic of any name in the last age pretended to “find any difference between the ancient Nazarenes and the Ebionites”³—that “no authority “whatever, ancient or modern, is to be produced “for that opinion of the origin of the Son from “the Father’s contemplation of his own perfections”⁴—and that, “should a man be found who “really believes in a future life of retribution, and “governs his conduct by that faith, so as to be as “perfect a character as a Christian, he scruples not “to say, that to him Christianity would be superfluous.”⁵

When I read these various and confident declarations of this learned gentleman I am all astonishment. Professing himself a Christian, we expect to find sincerity and truth in all his serious declarations, at least. How powerful then must be the bias of his mind, towards the system he has espoused, to be capable of such rash and erroneous assertions? May we not retort the words of the Doctor to Mr. Hawkins

¹Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 56.

²Letters to Dr. Horsley, p. 13.

³Do. p. 23.

⁴Do. part 2. p. 34.

⁵Animad: on White’s Sermons, p. 72.

Hawkins upon himself, and say — “ I now see
 “ that there is something in the *doctrines of Socinus*,
 “ which has more power than I was aware of, to
 “ blind the eyes of men, in other respects honest
 “ and ingenuous; and to produce a degree of self-
 “ delusion almost equal to any thing, that we see
 “ in Bedlam? This makes me thankful to God,
 “ that my situation and circumstances have been
 “ different from *his*. For I am far from thinking,
 “ that either my understanding, or my heart is na-
 “ turally better than *his*. But what must we think
 “ of a system, which has such power of perverting
 “ the best faculties and dispositions that God has
 “ given to man! Let all those, who are happily
 “ out of the influence of its fascination join in the
 “ most ardent prayers, and the most earnest, but
 “ peaceable endeavours, for the demolition of it.”

This address of the Doctor's, is, in my opinion,
 not more applicable to any set of men upon earth
 than it is to himself and his Socinian brethren.
 For, be his learning and abilities what they may, it
 must be most evident, I think, to all impartial men,
 that he is either very ignorant,* very hasty, and
 intemperate

*Letters to Mr. Hawkins, in his Defences of Unitarianism for
 the years 1788 and 1789.

*A man may be a very able experimental philosopher, and yet
 profoundly ignorant of various other branches of knowledge. Dr.
 Priestley's learning is said to be general; but, in most branches, su-
 perficial. It is very evident, that when he wrote his History of
 the Corruptions of Christianity, he was far from being well inform-

intemperate in his conclusions; or, being deceived himself, he labours to deceive others. That he is ignorant in these matters cannot be conceived: that he designedly contradicts and perverts the truth, charity forbids us to suppose: we must therefore conclude, that he himself is deceived by his enthusiastic zeal to promote the system he hath espoused. Hence all his bold assertions so absolutely contrary both to truth and matter of fact. That this is the case I appeal still farther to the judicious Reader, by a review of several of these propositions, which have been just mentioned. And,

“ None of the ancient prophecies give us
“ any reason to expect more than a mere man in
“ the Messiah.”

Let the Reader turn to Gen. 3. 15.—Psalm 110.

1.—Is. 9. 6.—Jer. 23. 6.—Micah 5. 2. besides
various

ed upon the subjects he undertook to discuss; seeing few works were ever laid before the public, which contain more frequent and important instances of inaccuracy. The Doctor should, therefore, be more modest in his pretensions, and less dogmatical in his assumptions. Men of minds truly enlarged, of attainments any how considerable, and of pious humble spirits; men who have for a number of years been conversant in the best authors, and who have drunk deep into the mind that was in Christ, feel themselves incapable of such intemperate assertions. Let the Doctor be allowed all the merit to which he is justly entitled. He is a laborious man. His attainments are undoubtedly very considerable, and in many respects he surely has great worth. But yet let him not affect that to which he is not equal. Whoever pretends to an acquaintance with the various branches of learning, must be superficial upon some, and consequently liable to considerable mistakes on those subjects, whenever he attempts to lay his thoughts upon them before the public.

various other places, and he will find the Doctor does not speak according to truth.

2. "The Apostles never taught any other than
"the mere humanity of Christ."

So says Dr. Priestley. But let the Reader turn to the following passages, and he will find there is little dependence to be placed upon the Doctor's word, when he is warmed with controversy: Mat. 1. 23.—Ibid. 11. 27.—Ibid. 28. 18, 19.—John 1. 1—14.—Ibid. 5. 17—29.—Phil. 2. 5—11.—Col. 1. 14—17, and many others.⁵

3. "Jesus Christ is never once called God in all
"the new Testament, not even in the lowest sense
"of all."⁶

This

⁵For other passages of scripture in proof of the pre-existence, super-humanity, and divinity of Christ, see these *Strictures* page 41—43.

⁶In this respect as well as in several other Dr. Priestley goes much greater lengths than his predecessors in the same cause; for "they own, that the name of God is given in holy scripture to Jesus Christ; but contend, that it is only a deputed title, which invests him, however, with an absolute sovereignty over all created beings, and renders him an object of worship to men and angels."—*New and Gen. Biog. Dict. art. F. Socinus*, vol. 11. p. 468.

It should be observed here, that all the Socinians of the sixteenth century were not of this opinion: for they soon split into two parties, and a warm controversy was carried on between Socinus and some of his learned disciples. "*Tanta est discordia fratrum.*"

Now that I am speaking of a difference of opinion among the Socinians of the sixteenth century, we may go a little farther and give a short sketch of the state of the variations which have prevailed among the enemies of the orthodox faith, both before and since that time. They all claim the truth as their own. Every one is eager to make converts to his particular opinions; and yet, though they are perfectly agreed in their opposition to the divinity

This is another of the Doctor's assertions. Now let the Reader consult Mat. 1. 23.—John 1. 1—14.—Ibid. 20. 28, 29.—Acts 20. 25.—Rom. 9. 5.—Heb. 1. 8, and some other passages, and then let him judge according to evidence.

4. "We

of Christ, and its concomitant doctrines, they differ as widely almost from each other, as they do from the Orthodox themselves. It will be a question, therefore, if we must desert the faith once delivered to the saints, to which of these various parties we must unite ourselves. And this is a question which must be previously settled. And till this is settled wise men will be extremely cautious how they renounce the deity and atonement of their Saviour. Ebion was the first who held our Lord to be a mere man. Cerinthus supposed there were two persons in Christ. In the following ages arose Theodotus, Artemon, Beryllus, Paul of Samosata, and some others, who all agreed in denying our Lord's divinity, but each of them had new and singular opinions of their own. Nor were the Arians in the fourth century better agreed. "The members of this sect," says Mosheim, "were divided among themselves, and torn into factions, which regarded each other with the bitterest aversion." For, rejecting the creed agreed upon at Nice, they successively drew up many others; if I mistake not, no fewer than seventeen in the space of forty years. And are our modern opposers of the divinity of Christ all united in their sentiments? By no means. Dr. Clarke seems to suppose he was begotten from eternity. See *Scripture Doctrine*, p. 247. Others held that he was begotten before the worlds, but not from eternity. Socinus and Dr. Priestley will have it, that he had no existence whatever before his conception in the womb of the Virgin. Socinus says he is called God. Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey say he is not called God. Some say he created the world and appeared to Moses and the Patriarchs. Dr. Priestley insists upon it, he neither created the world, nor appeared as the other suppose. Some of the ancient heretics assure us he had no human nature, no body, no soul; others he had no divine nature. Some said he was begotten of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Priestley insists he was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. Dr. Clarke allows the Son to be invested with distinct worship in his own person. *Script. Doct.* p. 338. Dr. Price insists that religious worship is to be confined to God the Father only. See *Sermons*, p. 101. Socinus, though he contended that Christ was a mere man, yet could not allow

4. "We find nothing like divinity ascribed to Christ before the time of Justin Martyr."

This is another of the learned gentleman's bold declarations, and has as little truth in it as any of the former. To pass over the Epistles of Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and other ancient monuments prior to that period, let the Reader only be at the trouble of reconsidering those several passages of scripture to which I have already referred him under the former propositions, and he cannot fail of satisfaction.

5. "Irenæus never charges the Ebionites as heretics, but only expresses a great dislike of them."

So says Dr. Priestley. But let Irenæus speak for himself:—"The authority of the gospels is such, that even the *heretics* themselves bear witness to it, since each of them endeavours to confirm his own doctrine from those writings. For the *Ebionites*, using only the gospel according to St. Matthew, are by that convicted of error in their

them to be Christians who denied him religious worship, and, it is said, persecuted Francis David even unto imprisonment for denying adoration to the Saviour. Dr. Priestley, however, withholds this adoration from the Redeemer, contends there is another more glorious Messiah to come, and seems to divest Jesus Christ of the chief honour as universal Judge at the end of the world. From all these considerations, I think, we may justly say with the late very learned Dr. Waterland, that "the several kinds of heresies which have affected this scripture truth, are but the various wanderings of human imagination. Truth is simple and uniform, while error is almost infinite." Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 325.

“ their notions of our Lord. Marcion, cutting off
 “ much of the gospel according to St. Luke, may
 “ be proved a blasphemer against the only God,
 “ from the parts which he retains.” This asser-
 tion is conclusive. What authority then is due to
 the Doctor’s declaration ?

6. Dr. Priestley says, “ the genuineness of our
 “ present copies of the Epistles of Ignatius is not
 “ only very much doubted, but generally given up
 “ by the learned.”

If

“ Lib. 3. cap. 11.—See this opinion of Irenæus proved at large
 in Bishop Horley’s Tracts, p. 434—457. where he sums up the
 evidence in the following manner :—“ It appears that the Ebio-
 nites are repeatedly mentioned by Irenæus, and never mention-
 ed but as heretics. When any heavy charge against heretics is
 “ to be confirmed by particular instances, the Ebionites seldom are
 “ forgotten. In the first book, they appear in a list of heretical
 “ sects, as one instance among many confirming the author’s ge-
 “ neral assertion, that all the heretical sects, of his own and the
 “ preceeding age, had their root and origin in the doctrines of Si-
 “ mon Magus. In the third book, they are mentioned as one in-
 “ stance of heretics, who, rejecting the greater part of the four
 “ gospels, contribute to the general evidence of the authenticity
 “ and credit of those writings, by their solicitude to build their
 “ particular opinions upon the parts which they receive, and yet
 “ are convicted of error in those opinions, by those very parts to
 “ which they appeal. In another passage of the third book,
 “ they are described as persons in a state of impenitence and har-
 “ dened infidelity, lying under the dreadful sentence of eternal
 “ damnation. In the fourth book, their sect is mentioned among
 “ those, whom the Spiritual Disciple, that is, the sound believer,
 “ will judge. In the fifth book, they are mentioned among here-
 “ tics, whose doctrines are demolished all in the lump, and at one
 “ blow, by being contrasted with the scheme of man’s redemption
 “ truly stated. And in another passage of the same book, their
 “ distinguishing tenet of the mere humanity of our Lord is alledged
 “ as an instance of the ignorance and blindness of heretics, and of
 “ the forwardness of such persons to oppose their own salvation.”

If Dr. Priestley's assertion may pass for argument and truth, the seven Epistles of Ignatius we see are *generally* given up by the learned. But—is it so? Is this the fact? By no means. Dr. Priestley may give them up because they subvert that system of doctrine, which he is determined to support at all hazards: and a few others may join him in crying them down, because they maintain the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons: but that they are *generally* given up by the learned is a notorious untruth. For it is well known, that a large majority of the learned in ecclesiastical antiquity consider the epistles in question as the genuine productions of the pious bishop and martyr to whom they are ascribed: Nor is there any good reason to think, that they have suffered more by the hand of time or interpolation than other writings of the same antiquity. Let this be, however, as it may, these seven celebrated epistles are considered as genuine, for any thing that appears to the contrary, by all the learned Fathers of the church for the first four or five centuries; by those very Fathers from whom we receive the holy scriptures themselves as the true and infallible word of the Most High. And of those learned men, who have lived since the Reformation, they have been considered as authentic by some of the most celebrated in this department of literature. In this number are to be ranked the names of Fabricius—J. Vossius—Usher—Hammond

Hammond—Brucker—Huetius—Ittigius—Peta-
vius—Grotius—Pearson—Bull—Cave—Wake—
Cotelerius—Grabe—Dupin—Fleury—Tillemont
—Bochart—Le Clerc—Nelson—Reeves—Leslie
—Hickes—Marshal—Beveridge—Chillingworth
—Waterland—Zanchius—Buddæus—Bishop—Ber-
riman—Clarke—Moshiem—Lardner—Bingham
—Randolph—Jortin:—and indeed the great body
of the learned in every age have been fully of opini-
on, that these epistles are the genuine work of the
author to whom they are ascribed. With what
face then can Dr. Priestley say, they are *generally*
given up by the learned?—The case is plain—it
doth not suit the Doctor's hypothesis to admit them.
—But then—where is truth, fidelity, and honour?
It is by arts like these Voltaire explodes even the
bible itself.*

7. “No critic of any name in the last age pre-
tended to find any difference between the anti-
cent Nazarenes and the Ebionites.”

So says Dr. Priestley. But in this also he is
mistaken. For it is well known that both Grotius,
Vossius, Spencer, and Huetius, who all lived in the
last age, and who were all critics of name, main-
tained a distinction between these two sects. The
learned

*For the authority of these celebrated Epistles of Ignatius—See
Bishop Horsley's Tracts, p. 120—Archbp. Wake's Apostol: Fa-
thers—Dr. Clarke's Reflections on Amyntor—And Bp. Pearson's
Vindiciæ.—See also Bp. Bull's Defence of the Nicene Faith,
c. 2. s. 6.—Likewise Eusebius's Eccl. Hist. b. 3. c. 36.—Con-

learned Mosheim of the present age has done the same.* Whether justly or unjustly concerns not us to enquire. I only mention the circumstance to satisfy the Reader how little credit is due to Dr. Priestley's most positive declarations.

8. " No authority whatever, ancient or modern, is to be produced for that opinion of the origin of the Son from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections."

This is another of the Doctor's bold assertions. But bishop Horsley hath made it appear, that several of the Christian fathers, various of the Schoolmen, Melancthon, the most learned of all the Protestant reformers, besides several more, were of this opinion, and prove the fallacy of Dr. Priestley's declaration.*

9. " Should a man be found who really believes in a future life of retribution, and governs his
L " conduct

sult moreover the Notes to Kett's Sermons, p. 21—24. " These Epistles," says this last gentleman, "are some of the most curious and valuable remains of apostolical antiquity. It is no wonder that the Socinian is eager to overthrow their authority, when not only every page, but almost every sentence must convince him of his erroneous opinions."—This last expression is somewhat too strong and hyperbolical: but assuredly Ignatius's Epistles and Socinianism cannot stand together. And therefore we may say with an unknown Author—" Dr. Priestley is certainly in the right to reprobate these Epistles, if he can; they subvert all his theology and history."

Bp. Horsley's Tracts, p. 300.

* See Ditto, p. 127, 128.

* See Ditto, p. 458—476.

“conduct by that faith, so as to be as perfect a character as a Christian, to him Christianity would be superfluous.” — So says the Doctor. Now this declaration seems to me to militate against the whole tenor of the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ. I will only produce two or three passages of holy scripture, and leave them to the consideration of the serious Reader.

Jesus saith unto his disciples—*I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*¹

Again:—*Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door unto the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* And then Christ adds—*I am the door of the sheep.*²

St. Peter declares:—*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*³

I will add the testimony of St. Paul:—*There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*⁴

Again:—*Without shedding of blood is no remission.*⁵

Dr. Priestley is here most evidently against the bible, and the bible against Dr. Priestley. The Reader will judge to which credit is due. The Doctor's proposition is sheer deism.

Upon a review of all these particulars, I cannot help observing, that I know of no respectable writer

¹John 14. 6.—²Ibid. 10. 1, 7.—³Acts 4. 32.

⁴1 Tim. 2. 5.—⁵Heb. 9. 22.

writer so like to Dr. Priestley in rash and unfounded assertions as the celebrated Voltaire.* No man ought to read either one or the other, as I have observed in another place, without much previous knowledge and caution. They are neither of them to be trusted, even in their most solemn declarations, on subjects where their minds are prejudiced. Their zeal carries them beyond all bounds, Truth is sacrificed to party views, and their boldest assertions are not to be regarded by the friends of candour and moderation. We have seen already how fallacious some of the Doctor's are; Voltaire's are not less so, in abundance of instances. He loses all patience when he speaks of the Jewish nation and the holy scriptures, just as Dr. Priestley does when he speaks of the doctrine of the Trinity, with the divinity and atonement of Christ. I will produce two or three declarations of this French infidel, to justify these assertions, and leave the Reader to judge how little regard is due to any thing he advances upon the mere credit of his own veracity.

He says then—"In all the annals of the Hebrew

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"nation

*"It must be allowed, that the enemies of Christianity attack it with some advantage on their side, from the light temper of the age, and from possessing those qualities which are suited to its temper. In their writings they display ingenuity, vivacity, gaiety; they are sparing of grave argument, or rather seem to despise it. They have invented a mode of investigation extremely alluring to the indolent and unexperienced: they assert boldly, conclude rashly, and put on an affected negligence, when they talk of religion.—Such is Voltaire."

Hunter's Observations on the History of Christ,
introd. p. 11, 12.

“ nation, we do not meet with a single generous
“ action.”

In opposition to this assertion, see the story of Joseph's conduct to his brethren in the book of Genesis:—Moses' conduct to the Israelites, Ex. 32. 9—13.—Ibid. 32. 31, 32, and Num. 14. 11—19:—Jonathan's conduct to David 1 Sam. 19 and 20 chapters:—and Daniel's to the wise men of Babylon, Dan. 2. 24.

To these instances of generosity, such as Voltaire himself was never capable of imitating, might be added many others from the Jewish history, of a similar kind, were it necessary; but these are amply sufficient to prove, that Voltaire was a man to whom credit cannot always be given with safety.

Again:—“ There are no marks of politeness, or
“ science, or of any improvement in the arts, to be
“ met with among these atrocious nations”—the
Hebrews.’

In answer to this intolerable falsehood, I refer the Reader, who has curiosity enough to investigate the business, to the “ Letters of certain Jews to Vol-
“ taire.” They are both instructive and entertaining. The hoary Infidel cuts but a very poor figure in them. I entreat the admirer of this French philosopher to do himself the justice to read
carefully

⁹Voltaire's Works by Williams and others, vol. 1. p. 68.

¹Ibid. vol. 1. p. 69.

carefully and consider soberly these very able and politely written letters.*

SECTION XI.

WE may moreover observe here, that Dr. Priestley is equally intemperate in his theology and politics. For, having used his best endeavours to undeify his Saviour, and annihilate his Sanctifier; to fallibilize the scripture, and degrade the sacred writers from the rank they have usually held in the esteem of mankind; to unfaint the primitive Fathers, and to faint the ancient heretics; he proceeds in his political career to predict, and to triumph in the expectation of, the subversion of the constitution of his country both in church and state. Kings and Bishops are bugbears to the Doctor, and he is determined, as far as lies in his power, to exterminate them from the face of the earth. "We are," says he, "as it were, laying gunpowder under the old building of error and superstition,

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" which

*Consult also the Rev. Robert Findlay's Vindication of the Sacred Books from the misrepresentations and cavils of this celebrated Infidel.

See Barnard's Letters to Dr. Priestley likewise, for a glaring misrepresentation of Tillemont on the conduct of Constantine, at the council of Nice, by the Doctor, p. 145 and 149.

Dr. Priestley asserts also, that Irenæus has never quoted the Shepherd of Hermas, in any of his five books; which assertion is well known to be contrary to matter of fact.

See moreover another remarkable mistatement of facts by the Doctor, respecting the seventh book of Clemens Alexandrinus Stromata, in Bp. Horsley's Tracts, p. 185—190, and Gentleman's Magazine for Feb. 1791, p. 101.

“ which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so
 “ as to produce an instantaneous explosion; in
 “ consequence of which, that edifice, the creation
 “ of which has been the work of ages, may be
 “ overturned in a moment, and so effectually, as
 “ that the same foundation can never be built
 “ upon again.”³

Again:—“ A small change in the political state
 “ of things, such as no man can foresee before it
 “ actually takes place, and which may be at no
 “ great distance, may suffice to overturn the best
 “ compacted establishments at once, before the bi-
 “ goted friends of them suspect any danger.”⁴ All
 the friends of orthodoxy are bigots, in the opinion
 of Dr. Priestley, and all who favour his own theo-
 logical and political sentiments are lovers of truth,
 reason, philosophy, and light!

Again:—“ Things are already in such a train,
 “ that though no person can foresee the particular
 “ time and manner of the change in favour of Uni-
 “ tarianism, we may be as certain of its taking
 “ place, as if we actually saw it accomplished; and
 “ till things are perfectly ripe for such a revoluti-
 “ on, it would be absurd to expect it, and in vain
 “ to attempt it.”⁵—It should seem from this decla-
 ration,

³Import. of Free Inquiry, p. 40, 41.

⁴Ibid. p. 39.

⁵Ibid. p. 41.

tation, that when Dr. Priestley takes it into his head things are perfectly ripe for a revolution in church and state, he will not be backward to lend an helping hand. It is very possible, however, he may be more courageous in his study than he will prove in the field. When he was told the mob were coming upon him at the late unhappy riots at Birmingham, he took to his heels, instead of staying to expostulate with them concerning "The Rights of Man, Liberty, and Equality," as a true Philosopher ought to have done. And when this Revolution business comes on—these will be glorious times!—which he is in such anxious expectation of, the Doctor may happen to find his courage fail him again. For he may be assured there are men to be found, who, when duty calls, will not be backward to try his prowess in the field of Mars, as well as in polemical discussion.

Again:—"It has been said that if the Dissenters gain this point (the repeal of the corporation and test acts) they will aim at something more. This I acknowledge. We should ask many things more, because there are many things more that we conceive ourselves entitled to.—We feel them to be burthens, and shall take every fair opportunity of endeavouring to relieve ourselves.

L 4

" Let

" Let the bench of Bishops be fully apprised of this, and take their measures accordingly."

And again:—" It is nothing but the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world (an alliance which our Lord himself expressly disclaimed) that supports the grossest corruptions of Christianity; and perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil powers, before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an effect?"

It is evident from these several declarations, that Dr. Priestley is straining every nerve to subvert the constitution of his country.⁷ Every man, therefore, who is satisfied with the present state of things, and wishes not for a return of the puritanical times, or to see this kingdom involved in the horrors of a civil war, as is now the case with our neighbours, should take all proper steps to counteract the insidious designs of the Doctor and his friends. Till very lately, the members of the Establishment seem to have been asleep, dreaming no danger is at hand, while they are sowing their tares, laying their trains of gunpowder, dispersing their inflammatory pamphlets,

⁷Letter to Mr. Pitt, p. 20.

⁸Corruptions of Christ. vol. 2. p. 484.

⁹See a just account of the excellence of the constitution of England in Montefquieu's Spirit of Laws b. 11. c. 6.

lets, and exerting all their influence to make the common people dissatisfied with the conduct of their governours. They meet, associate, raise funds, advertise, buy books, and spread them gratis to all who are disposed to read. I could earnestly wish some measures of a similar kind were adopted by those who are the friends of the present constitution, in all our populous towns, where the Dissenters are particularly busy in their seductive arts. Though every man, who thinks at all upon the subject, must see that there are several things in the constitution of this country, which might, possibly, be

“The republican landed and monied gentry of the north of Ireland, have, it is said, circulated 20,000 Paine's Rights of Man at twopence a-piece.”

See Sir Brooke Boothby's, Bart. Observations on that Work, p. 185.

The society for constitutional information, held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Friday June 15th. 1792, ordered twelve thousand copies of Paine's Letter to Mr. Secretary Dundas to be printed, and distributed throughout Great Britain.

There are various answers to Mr. Paine's publications, especially to his “Rights of Man.” The above of Sir Brooke Boothby's is amply sufficient. Not that he condemns every thing in that work, for undoubtedly Paine advances many important truths. But upon the whole, “The Rights of Man” is a very sophistical and pernicious book, calculated to mislead *superficial* thinkers, and to involve this happy and flourishing country in all the horrors of a civil war, and all the destructive consequences of a national bankruptcy. Let the admirer of Paine's book look at France at this present moment, September 18th. 1792, and bless himself that he has his abode in England. Let him moreover do himself the justice to read coolly, if he *can* read coolly, an able answer to Paine's book, entitled, “A Protest against T. Paine's Rights of Man.” It is a valuable little work, and has run through four editions in a short time. No other answer need be read. It is sold by Longman, price (only) one shilling.

be altered for the better, yet, I believe, there is good sense enough among the great bulk of the people, to discover when they are well and happy. They will not therefore be disposed to risk a certainty for an uncertainty. They will be content to wait, *doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with their God, and not speaking evil of dignities*, till Providence shall think proper to meliorate the state of things. Some government there must be.* Some persons must be in power. The simple question therefore is, whether we shall continue our present mixed form, of King, Lords, and Commons, which
has

*Whoever considers well the dreadful convulsions which were perpetually taking place in the Grecian and Roman commonwealths, and weighs thoroughly the vast superiority of this country to all the commonwealths now in being, both in riches, power, freedom, and happiness, will have little inclination to risque a change. The woman in Prov. 14. 1. is not spoken of as the wisest of women, who *plucked down her house with her own hands*, to save others the trouble. And should the inhabitants of this country be persuaded to do like her, instead of the kingdom of God immediately appearing, (which many of our canting enthusiasts seem to think would be the case) a very Babel would arise in consequence. If the experience of the present wrong-headed levellers in France, those philosophical deists and atheists, (as Dr. Priestley informs us they most of them are) and if, moreover, the experience of the last century in this kingdom cannot make us wise, most certain it is, that we never shall become so. Happy are they whom other people's misfortunes make cautious. Some of the greatest men in France have been deceived in their unhappy business. Many of the same description were last century deceived in this country. And the Italian proverb says, If a man deceives me once, it is his fault; if twice, it is mine. Let us not hesitate, therefore, between a legal and mild government under King George, and a usurped government under a mob of petty tyrants, with some wretched Cromwell at their head. If we are called to look at America as a model of a happy government—I reply—Let us wait a century before we give a decided opinion upon that subject.

has been considered by many of the most experienced politicians as the perfection of government, or whether two of the branches of the legislature shall be swallowed up by the third, and we reduced once more to a Commonwealth, with a few tyrannical despots at the helm of affairs. This is the present struggle. The existing state of things must be subverted: Kings, Lords, and Bishops banished: Christ Jesus dragged from his throne: The Holy Spirit annihilated: The human soul materialized: Dr. Priestley and his *enlightened* friends brought into power: and then this restless gentleman will be satisfied.* But, notwithstanding all his sanguine expectations, and all the exertions of his inflammatory co-adjutors,

*Dr. Priestley makes a lamentable outcry concerning the late unhappy riots at Birmingham, and *pettishly*—not charitably, neither *philosophically*—accuses the whole town and neighbourhood, high and low, of being concerned in the dismal business, and involved in the guilt. Surely this is an atrocious accusation. The Doctor's spirit is too much agitated to judge candidly. But he is excusable. The treatment he met with was undoubtedly unjustifiable, upon any principle either of religion or sound policy, and the loss to the philosophical world may never be repaired. But according to the principles of retaliation the Doctor met with no more than he justly deserved. A man who treats the laws, the religion, the governors, and the government of his country as Dr. Priestley has done, can have no right to expect the favour of those governors, or the protection of that government. The Jury at Warwick assizes were so sensible of this, that they refused to allow the Doctor any damages for the burning of his numerous manuscript compositions, though these, in all probability, were, in his own estimation, the most valuable part of his property. Mr. Hardinge, the council employed against him, gave them such a specimen of the pernicious tendency of the writings which the Doctor has already published, by a variety of extracts from them, that they could no longer consider those that were still in embryo as of any positive value.

co-adjutors, I humbly trust, and firmly believe, the nation is not yet so infatuated as to be prepared for this change. A vast majority of the people are well satisfied with our present governours. And every man, that is so satisfied, should endeavour to diffuse his own peaceful sentiments among the people all around him. There are a few cheap low-priced books that might be dispersed among the common people with good effect. If I could afford it I would at my own expence send them into every family in Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Norwich, and every other large town where the Dissenters are exerting their influence to raise commotions in the minds of the people. The books I here allude to are—on religious subjects—The late bishop Horne's two excellent Sermons on "the Duty of contending for the Faith," and "the Trinity in Unity;" and "A Preservative against the Publications dispersed by Modern Socinians:"—on political subjects—"Historical Memoirs of religious Dissension;" and "A Look to the Last Century; or the Dissenters weighed in their own Scales." Whoever seriously reads the two former of these little pamphlets will have little inclination to embrace Dr. Priestley's Socinian principles: And whosoever candidly considers the contents of the two latter, together with the "Protest against T. Paine's Rights of Man," before mentioned, will never wish to see any convulsion or
revolution

revolution in the constitution of this country, especially if it is to originate with the gentlemen who are so strenuous for a republican form of government.

If it be enquired whether I myself see no need of a reformation?—I ingenuously answer—I do.—And whether I am *perfectly* satisfied with the constitution of this country both in church and state?—Certainly not.—Many things, in my judgment, might be altered for the better. And I doubt not but such melioration of the state of things will *gradually* take place. But I see no defects of that magnitude to render it advisable to convulse the kingdom, and to plunge ourselves into a civil war, for the sake of them. We have much to lose, and little to gain.³ A peaceable, temperate, internal reform of the decayed parts of the constitution, whether in church or state, is what no real friend to his country could have any solid objection to. The Constitution has already received many such from the spirited efforts of individuals, from the combined talents of united patriots, and from the progressive wisdom of ages. But then these improvements have been dictated by experience and guided by prudence.“ They were
 “ not the fantastical theories of wild philosophical
 “ speculatists, intoxicated with the vanity of over-
 “ turning whatever was established. They were
 “ real improvements, meriting the approbation of
 “ the

³See a small Pamphlet entitled “A Word in Season to the Traders and Manufacturers of Great Britain.”

“ the wife, the support of the brave, and the affectionate attachment of every friend to his country.”⁴

SECTION XII.

I HAVE now thrown a few of the curious sentiments of this philosophical Divine into one view, and made such observations upon them as occurred to my mind as we went along. Pretensions to novelty they can have little, seeing most of them are found in the writings of Chubb, Tindal, Socinus, and other authors of a similar description. What is more remarkable, I think, than any of his opinions, is, that, with all his fanatical assumptions and indecent dogmatism upon theological subjects, of which here are ample specimens, he himself is the veriest weather-cock that ever existed. A few years ago, he was, by his own confession, successively, a strict Calvinist—a Trinitarian—an Arian—a high

⁴The public papers have just informed us, that Dr. Priestley and Mr. Paine are elected members of the national convention in France. Mr. Paine, it seems, is gone. Whether Dr. Priestley will think proper to accept the honour the Jacobins have done him, we are not yet told. If he does, I sincerely wish he may be instrumental in the hands of Providence in teaching them to believe in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent; to do justice, love mercy, and repent for all the innocent blood which they have shed.—The Almighty has evidently a quarrel with that great nation. I hope he will scourge them in measure. And when he hath accomplished his displeasure upon them, that he will bring order out of confusion, and cause happiness to spring from their present misery. They seem too much enlightened ever to submit to an arbitrary government again. If they deserve liberty they shall have it. But they have lately given us many horrible specimens of their demerit. They seem resolved to destroy every great man from among them, unless he is as mad as themselves.

a high Socinian—and now he is a low Socinian—and he still declares it doubtful whether his creed be yet fixed. “I shall not be offended,” says the Doctor, “if you should account for my roving from one opinion to another, by supposing, that I have a temper of mind too hostile to every thing that is established; or if you should say, that I am more apt to be satisfied with any thing belonging to myself, than with my opinions, and that I am not likely to fix long in any scheme.”

“It

Letters to Dr. Horsley, pref. p. 5.—I have often been struck with the description of the ancient Heretics, given by an anonymous Author, in the latter end of the second, or beginning of the third century. How far several parts of it are applicable to some of our modern Sectarists the Reader will judge:—“They have boldly,” says this Author, “adulterated the holy scriptures; they have rejected the rule of the primitive faith; and have been ignorant of Christ. They are not inquisitive after that which the sacred writings declare, but bestow much labour and pains in finding out such syllogisms as may confirm the scheme of their impiety. And if any one proposes to them a text of the divine scriptures, they examine whether a connective or disjunctive form of a syllogism may be made of it. Leaving the holy scriptures of God, they study geometry. Being of the earth they speak of things earthly; and are ignorant of him who comes from above. Therefore amongst some of them Euclid’s geometry is studied with great application. Aristotle and Theophrastus are admired. And Galen, in like manner, is by others of them almost adored. Why need I say that these persons (who make use of the arts of infidels for the confirmation of their erroneous opinions, and by the craft of atheists debase the true authority of the holy scriptures) are at the greatest distance from the faith? Hence it is that they have rashly laid their hands upon the sacred writings, saying, that they ought to be corrected. Whoever is desirous may easily be informed that I speak not this falsely of them. For would any one examine the copies of the scriptures which they have collected together, and compare them one with another, he would find that they differed very much one from another: For the copies of Asclepiadotus agree not with those of

“ It is certain,” continues he, “ that, so far
 “ from having much fondness for the opinions that
 “ I received from my education, I have gone on
 “ changing, though always in one direction, from
 “ the time that I begun to think for myself to the
 “ present day, and I will not pretend to say when
 “ my creed will be fixed.”⁶

Where this unstable gentleman means to terminate his retrograde motions, whether with Hobbs, Hume, and Voltaire,⁷ or with Vanini of Italy, Spinoza

“ Theodotus. Many such copies as these may be procured ; because their followers have with much labour and curiosity written the corrections, as they call them, of their several instructors. Again ; the copies of Hermophilus agree not with these just mentioned : and those of Apollonides differ one from another. For whoever will be at the trouble to compare them, will find that those copies first put forth by him, do very much disagree with his other copies, which he afterwards did again wrest and disfigure. How much impudence there is in this wicked action, it is likely they themselves are not ignorant : *for either they do not believe the sacred writings to have been dictated by the Holy Spirit, and then they are infidels : or else they account themselves wiser than the Holy Ghost ; and what are they then but fanatics ?* For they cannot deny this audacious fact to have been done by their own selves, because the copies have been written out by their own hands ; neither did they receive such copies as these from those who were their instructors ; nor yet can they shew the copies out of which they transcribed these things. But some of them have not indeed been at the pains to adulterate the scriptures, but, having wholly rejected both the Law and the Prophets, by a lawless and atheistical doctrine, under a pretence of grace, they are fallen into the lowest pit of destruction.”

Euseb. Eccl. Hist. b. 5. chap. 28.

⁶Letters to Dr. Price, p. 167.

⁷“ Toland and Tindal, attempting to write in defence of Socinianism, became professed deists, and wrote against the Christian religion.

noza of Holland, and Mr. William Hammon of Liverpool, is impossible for any one yet to say: for we read of some, who are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; who are like children, carried away with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness wherby they lie in wait to deceive.* And we are told by the same authority, that *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* This unstable temper, these winds of doctrine and flights of men, this cunning craftiness and itch of novelty, may lead the learned Doctor into greater inconveniences than he seems at present to have any apprehension of. Be this, however, as it may, I leave the considerate Reader to judge, if this is not a pretty sort of gentleman to set up for a reformer of all the religions in Christendom? If we must believe such a Proteus-like philosopher, it may be very justly demanded, *when* we are to believe him? for he is extremely warm and positive under every change of sentiment.² One would have hoped

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past

“ Mr. Whiston, who was himself an Arian, being one day in conversation with Chubb, who was a Socinian, he (Whiston) told him, it would not be long before he embraced deism, and he did so.”

Hurd's View of all Religions, .p. 584.

Mr. Whitaker gives us a fuller view of these revolutions of several of the Socinian writers in his “ Origin of Arianism Disclosed,” p. 497—500.

²Letters to Young Men, &c. p. 55, and Animadversions on Mr. White's Sermons, p. 76, et alibi frequenter.

past experience might have made him cautious and modest in his future declarations. But alas! he seems incurable. He is more vaunting, if possible, in some of his late publications, than when he first set out in his polemical career. The lion is roused by the sharp stimulants of the shrewd Arch-deacon of St. Albans, and bishops, professors, and Bampton-lecturers; our Tillotsons, Stillingfleets, and Hurds; nay even your Clarkes, Hoadleys, Whistons, and Prices, are so many mere children before him.' Indeed, what are arch-bishops, bishops, professors, and Bampton-lecturers? Moses
and

'Dr. Priestley makes his boast, that very few of the patrons of orthodoxy, and almost none of the advocates of Arianism, step forward to vindicate their respective schemes. Let the Doctor be told, that the reason of their silence is, probably, not what he supposes it to be. He imagines the patrons of the two schemes distrust the ground on which they stand, or that they are afraid of encountering his rare polemical abilities. In both these suppositions, I apprehend, the Doctor is mistaken. The reason of their silence is very different. If I might be permitted to answer for them, it should be in the words of a letter inserted in the Gentleman's Magazine for March, 1789, which I will transcribe at length.

" Mr. Urban,

" In page 10, is a letter from Dr. Priestley on the controversy which has for some time been carried on between him and his several antagonists. He still, I perceive, continues to write with his accustomed assurance, and to boast of his numerous victories over the advocates of orthodoxy, though repeatedly foiled by those advocates. But be it known unto this doughty champion, that his opponents desist not from the controversy because impartial men suppose they have received an overthrow, but because they are perfectly satisfied, that Dr. Priestley has been proved *incompetent* in the business of Christian antiquity by his more learned adversary, the Bishop of St. David's—that enough has been already said on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, to convince any candid impartial person,

and the Prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, are every one treated with like indignity. They all fall down confounded before this mighty antagonist of heaven:*

“ O’er shields, and helms, and helmed heads he *rides*

“ Of thrones, and mighty Seraphim prostrate.”

M 2

But—

“ by Bp. Bull, Mr. Leslie, Dr. Waterland, Dr. Allix, Mr. Jones, Bishop Horsley, Mr. Badcock, and others; a’l whose books are in the libraries of the learned—that the subject under debate is in very good hands, if the precipitate Doctor will vouchsafe indulgence in the article of time—that Dr. Priestley sets aside most of the principles of just interpretation, and by that means can make any thing of any thing—and, lastly, that whoever enters into a controversy with him must expect to carry on an eternal war; and, moreover, be insulted on every occasion with mock triumphs: for to confute him and to silence him are very different matters. The Doctor ought to know, Mr. Urban, that wise men will be satisfied with having said all that is necessary to convince *humble* enquirers after truth, rather than to be forever cavilling for the sake of victory. Besides, experience has taught his opponents, that he has an advantage they were little aware of, and which falls to the share of but very few; he can fight as well upon his back as upon his legs, and is of that wonderfully heroic spirit, that, let them knock him down ever so often, he will spring up again, call them fools and blockheads, and shout, Victory! Victory! and will never yield the day but with his last breath. I am therefore of opinion, that Dr. Horsley never displayed his good sense to greater advantage, than when, having said *enough* upon the question in debate, and proved Dr. Priestley’s incompetency, he disregarded, in silent contempt, the fresh challenges and provocations of his baffled adversary. For, seriously, Mr. Urban, were my learning and abilities ever so much superior, I would as soon encounter Thermites in loquacity, as the vaunting Doctor in controversy, upon any subject whatever.”

*Dr. Priestley has lately written a History of the Christian Church, in which, Mr. Burgefs tells us, he has given “ the most defective representations. I say defective,” continues he, “ because defective in essential circumstances, and partial, because consistent with the opinions of one part only, and that much the smallest part of those, who profess themselves to be Christi-

But—Dr. Priestley and his friends are learned men, and must know what are the true doctrines of the gospel.—

So was Spinoza a learned man, and yet he was an atheist: So was Voltaire a learned man, and yet he was a deist: So was Socinus, and yet he believed Jesus Christ was called God in holy scripture; worshipped him as such; and could hardly allow them to be Christians who refused him religious adoration: So was Mr. Whiston, yet he was an Arian, and for many years a strenuous opposer of the Socinians:—So was Baron Swedenborg, yet he was a Sabellian: And so are infinite numbers of excellent persons, who differ *toto cælo* from Dr. Priestley, and our other vaunting Unitarians, in their

“ans. It might have been expected from an historian of the
 “Christian Church, that in his account of the origin of the Christi-
 “an religion, he would not have omitted *any very* distinguishing
 “particulars relating to the personal character and authority of its
 “Founder. But Dr. Priestley has omitted the *most* distinguishing
 “particulars in the life and conversation of Jesus Christ. He says
 “nothing of the extraordinary circumstances of his birth, nothing
 “of his many discourses with the Jews and his disciples respecting
 “himself and his commission; and has *misrepresented* the nature
 “of the charge, on which, he was condemned to the cross. The
 “miraculous conception shews, that Jesus Christ had no human
 “father; yet Dr. Priestley calls him the son of Joseph, and says
 “nothing of his birth.”

Sermon on the Divinity of Christ, p. 45.

“Modest men, and sincere enquirers after truth, are ever to be
 esteemed, however they may differ from us in opinion: but vain,
 noisy, over-bearing, shallow disputants, who are evermore dis-
 turbing the company into which they are admitted with their poli-
 tical and religious nostrums, are to be had in detestation by all
 good men of every persuasion. A proud, haughty, boasting,

their religious sentiments. It may be added too, that the Apostate spirit, is, probably, more knowing by many degrees than the wisest divine or philosopher in the universe; and yet, with all his superior wisdom and knowledge, he still continues an enemy to God, and his only-begotten Son.* Considera-

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tions

vain-glorious spirit, is an infallible criterion of any man's being fundamentally erroneous. However just his speculative opinions may be, he is practically, morally, and religiously wrong. I have always considered the rule, laid down by the eminently pious Mr. Hervey, whereby to judge of the truth of our views of religion, as a very good one, and I still see no reason to be of a different opinion. "That doctrine," said he, "which tends

" To humble the sinner;

" To exalt the Saviour;

" To promote holiness;

" That doctrine, which tends to accomplish *all* these designs, you may embrace as sound. That which is defective in its influence on *any one* of them, you should reject as corrupt."

Theron and Aspasio, dial. 8.

*Though it is highly unbecoming both the man and the Christian to plead the authority of great names for what we are to believe; yet there is as much reason for the Orthodox to glory in the name of a Bacon or a Boyle, a Milton or a Grotius, a Bull or a Waterland, as for the Socinians to make their boast of such men as they think an honour to their cause. The fact is, neither on one side nor the other, is *mere* human authority to be much regarded. Every man must seek out truth for himself, and get the best evidence for his opinions that he can. One good and substantial reason is worth twenty great names. We ought however to be very careful how we dissent in matters of importance from serious, candid, learned, and religious men. If a man is a meek, humble, lowly, serious, judicious, learned, and well-informed man; and if his whole life, conduct, and tempers, bespeak him sincere and in earnest in his religious concerns; I should be very unwilling to dissent from his opinions on any of the great doctrines of redemption. Indeed I should not dare to do it without the most earnest and impartial investigation. And I would observe, on the other hand, that no man's sentiments on the leading truths of the gospel are of any great weight or importance, in my judgment, whose character

tions of this kind, however, can have little or no weight with Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, seeing the former doubts of the existence of the devil, and the latter is persuaded there is no such being.* This is fine news for the sinners in our Sion! But on those, who believe the holy scriptures, considerations like these will have an influence becoming the importance of the conviction.

But—Dr. Priestley* is a moral man, and a man of just worth and estimation.—

So

does not answer the above description. The names of Bishops, Lords, Dukes, and Kings, or even Philosophers, merely as such, are of extremely little moment with me, where the truth of religious opinions is concerned. Nothing upon earth can supply the place of humility and serious godliness.

*Dr. Price is of opinion there are angels both good and bad: See his Sermons, p. 122.—Dr. Priestley doubts of the existence of devils: See Letters to Dr. Price, p. 163.—But Mr. Lindsey is positive there is no devil, no satan, no demons: See *Vindiciæ Priestlianae*, pref. p. 6.

In answer to Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey on the subject of the existence of the fallen angels, I would only request the serious Reader to consult his bible. It is full of the doctrine. See especially, Mat. 10. 1.—Ibid. 25. 41.—Mark 5. 8, 9.—John 8. 44.—2 Cor. 11. 14, 15.—James 2. 19.—2 Pet. 2. 4.—1 John 3. 8.—Jude 6.—Mr. Lindsey and his learned friend may doubt and deny the doctrine—as what doctrine has not been doubted and denied?—But I defy them both to disprove it. I wish they could. They would perform a task extremely acceptable to mankind. They would deserve an honour much higher than that of a seat in the national convention of France, to which the latter of these gentlemen, it seems, is invited.

† “I have often been told,” says a pious writer, “that Dr. Priestley is a moral man, and have heard his sincerity highly commended, I suppose, in justification of his principles, or, at least, to lessen the censure which might be expected for the singularity of his opinions. He may be a very moral man, and his life, I doubt not, reproach the loose conduct of many, who,

So was Voltaire; so was Spinoza; so was Mr. Whiston; so was Baron Swedenborg; and so are multitudes of those learned and virtuous persons, who hold the religious principles of Dr. Priestley in the utmost abhorrence. We should always bear in mind, that something more is necessary to constituting a truly religious character besides the negative virtues. A man may be very proud, yet very temperate; very conceited, self-righteous, and wise in his own eyes (witness the Scribes and Pharisees) who is constitutionally free from all the grosser vices of human nature. In some men the vices of the body prevail: in some the vices of the mind: and in others both have the dominion. If we suppose that either great learning, or strict morals, are sure criterions of truth, we shall be led into strange absurdities: for men of the most contradictory

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opinions

"speculatively at least, maintain sounder principles: but this is
"no evidence, that he is either right or safe. Some men are con-
"stitutionally sober; and this, in an age of dissipation, of licen-
"tiousness and irreligion, is enough to acquire the reputation of
"being virtuous; especially, if this sobriety be accompanied with
"zeal for religion. A dissipated, irregular conduct will not con-
"sist with the views of a student, who is forever writing for the
"public. And they who venture to oppose established doctrines
"and broach heterodox opinions, find it necessary to put on
"sheep's clothing in order to gain attention and credit, and to give
"weight to their own system; or, at least, to prevent the alarm,
"which the apprehension of any dangerous tendency in their
"principles might occasion."

Jesse's Defence of the Church, p. 151, 152.

opinions have been both one and the other.* Great learning, properly used, is good: strict morals are essentially necessary to true religion: but great learning is no sure protection from destructive error; nor are strict morals, commonly so called, an infallible

“ If the question should be put, whether it be not, upon a general consideration, a greater crime to propagate heresy, or corrupt the true faith of Christ, to say nothing of infidelity, than to lead an irregular, or vicious course of life? We must affirm that it is; as being a crime, at once, of a more dangerous, and a more diffusive influence. It must be allowed, that he who poisons the fountains of natural religion and morality, if we may judge of his crime by the direct, and malignant effects of it, is much more criminal, than a mere immoral man: because his principles tend, if they be not so designed, to introduce an universal corruption of manners, and to destroy the very grounds and reasons of moral virtue in every kind. Heresies, in like manner, which tend to overthrow the doctrines of revealed religion, and especially if they be industriously propagated to that end, import more flagrant guilt, than a neglect of conforming ourselves, in other respects, to the rules of that religion. An heresiarch, in a word, when opposed to a bad Christian, is as a Julian or Celsus, upon the comparison, with a mere practical Pagan.

“ They are imposed upon, therefore, by a great fallacy, in their way of reasoning, who pretend, that men are not, in so high a measure, accountable for heretical notions, which yet they openly advance, as for a bad life; or that a man may more safely corrupt the faith of Christ; than be corrupt in his morals. For they do not state the case right, nor make a just comparison. Should any one lay down principles to justify impurity, or excess in eating or drinking, and so be a heretic (if the manner of expression may be allowed) in morality; such a one might, we grant, render himself more obnoxious and detestable, than a heretic, with respect to points properly theological. But, as the comparison is made, between a heretic and a bad immoral man; the question comes to this, whether it be not more dangerous, or do not argue, in the attempt, a greater depravation of mind, to corrupt the faith of the whole church, than to lay an occasion before certain particular persons of scandal, or perhaps of a guilty compliance, by a simple example.

infallible test of our being fundamentally right. We have had atheists, deists, and heretics of every description, both learned and moral. Nothing under heaven can supply the place of profound submission of soul to the dominion of the Son of God. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.*

I would not, however, be misunderstood in speaking of Dr. Priestley's change of sentiments: for to change sentiments may sometimes be a proof of wisdom and patient investigation. Rarely will a man be found, who is a consistently religious character, that has not had occasion to change some opinion or other.* But, in the name of common sense,

"It is not then without reason, that some persons are acted by a stronger zeal against heretics in opinion, than against libertines in practice; the preservation of the whole being of greater consequence, and more to be consulted, than the preservation of a small, or, in any degree, of a less part. While principles remain firm and unshaken, though men may act contrary to them, there is something still left to reduce them, and to prevent the defection of others. But when foundations are cast down, nothing but confusion and every evil work, can be expected to follow. I shall, upon all these accounts, take occasion to infer the necessity of a becoming zeal for preserving the purity of the faith, against all innovations whatever, as a necessary and indispensable duty. A duty, indeed, expressly enjoined in the holy scriptures, which require, and with which sanction, I shall therefore enforce this inference, that we should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints; and hold fast the profession of it without wavering."

Fiddes's Theologia Speculativa, b. 4. c. 1.

*Mr. Toplady is an extraordinary instance to the contrary. "It is not the smallest of my distinguishing mercies," says this able

sense, what is a sober Christian to do amidst all these revolutions of religious views, and high pretensions to superior light and information? Must he rashly conclude there is no such thing as truth, that it is in vain to seek after it, or that it is of no consequence what principles we embrace, if our lives are moral? This would be a conclusion equally fallacious and dangerous. It would be fallacious, because there surely is such a thing as truth, whether we may be happy enough to possess it or not: it would be dangerous, because it annihilates at one stroke all the duties of the first table of the law. A determined deist, or an avowed atheist,² may be a
moral

man, "that from the very commencement of my unworthy ministrations, I have not had a single doctrine to retract, nor a single word to unsay."

Caveat against unsound Doctrines, p. 18.

Some of my Readers will probably be of opinion, that it would have been much to this gentleman's honour to have retracted several of his doctrines, and unsaid many of the intemperate things which he advanced in the course of his polemical career.

²Spinoza, whom Bayle calls "the greatest Atheist that ever lived," is generally allowed to have been a sociable, honest, friendly, and good moral man. He was first a Jew, then a Christian, and then an Atheist. Notwithstanding his principles, he was moreover temperate, liberal, disinterested. He said nothing in conversation but what was edifying; never swore; never spoke disrespectfully of God.—How much more becoming was his conduct herein, than that of many of our modern Socinians, who are upon every occasion treating the doctrine of the holy and undivided Trinity, and the divinity and atonement of Christ, with the most indecent language, and the most scurrilous contempt? Dr. Priestley, in particular, has been extremely blameable in this respect. The foregoing Strictures contain abundant instances of the learned gentleman's indiscreet and fanatical zeal.

moral man; and, from one motive or another, a punctual observer of most of the duties of the second table. But shall we therefore conclude, either that there is no God, and no Saviour; or that it is unnecessary we should pay any regard to their existence, and the precepts they have enjoined?

SECTION XIII.

AMIDST all these jarring opinions, contradictory sentiments, and high pretensions to truth, what is a serious observer to do, it may be very reasonably asked, in order to arrive at a competent knowledge of the great doctrines and duties of natural and revealed religion? Here are, we have seen, both Atheists and Deists. These, as well as the more plausible among the several sects of Christians, put in their claim to truth, and require us to give them a dispassionate hearing. And, what is remarkable, each, even of these denominations, hath found men of considerable talents and respectability to espouse its cause. Vanini and Spinoza, as well as young Servin, were unquestionably persons of some abilities and learning. Indeed men of ordinary talents rarely go out of the common way. But shall we therefore conclude, that these bold and ardent spirits, who neither fear God nor regard man, are right, that all the rest of the world hath ever been deluded, and that there truly is no Supreme Being? Shall we not rather say with the royal Psalmist,

Psalmist, what is really the truth, that it is only *the fool who hath said in his heart, There is no God?* For who but a fool could make any such stupid declaration? seeing that there exists a supreme and intelligent Governour of the World, all "nature cries aloud through all her works?"

But, several of the Atheists³ were considerable men, and men of no mean attainments.—Be it so. Shall we, therefore, out of a silly, misguided, and irrational charity, annihilate our God, and forfeit every expectation that is dear among men? Shall we pay the compliment of singular wisdom and discernment to a few wretched Atheists, at the expense of the wisdom and discernment of all the world besides? If there are a few *lusi naturæ* in every department

³We have many very excellent treatises written to prove the being and perfections of God against the Atheists. Besides several others, the following are excellent:—1. Dr. Clarke's Discourse on the Being and Attributes of God. 2. Mr. Wollaston's Religion of Nature Delineated. 3. Bishop Wilkins' Principles and Duties of Natural Religion. 4. Mr. Ray on the Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation. 5. Dr. Derham's Physico and Astro-Theology. 6. Dr. Bentley's Sermons at Boyle's Lecture. 7. Archbishop Tillotson, on the Wisdom of being religious, vol. 1. ser. 1.—7. Dr. Nieuwentyt's Religious Philosopher. 8. Mr. Wesley's Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation. 9. Fenelon's Demonstration of the Existence, Wisdom, and Power of God.—I might add many more; but these are all excellent in their kind, and any one of them sufficient to confute all the Atheists that ever lived, upon the principles of fair and impartial reasoning. And if reasonable beings will not submit to fair and impartial reasoning, man can do nothing with them; they must be left to the God who made them, and whose existence they deny. He is able to convince them, And to him they shall go for that purpose.

partment of the works of God, shall we be so insatuated and absurd as to conclude, these are the only genuine productions of nature, and all the rest, a million to one, are monstrous births?

If this cannot be admitted with respect to Atheists, what shall we say to the Deistical gentry of the age? The former reject the existence of a God, the latter the existence of a Saviour. The Atheist laughs at the Deist, and the Deist despises the Atheist.* The holy scripture, however, that grand charter of all our dearest hopes and expectations, treats them both with nearly the same severity. For whatever pretences they have, and whatever qualifications they possess (and it is granted some of them have many pretences, and possess various
and

" *When David Hume was at Paris, some conversation on religious subjects is said to have passed between himself and Messrs. D'Alembert, Diderot, and other sublime geniuses, remarkable for their noble contempt of those narrow notions and vulgar prejudices which debased the understanding of a Bacon, a Newton, and a Locke. In the course of the conference, it was discovered, that Hume did not go quite so far in the unbeliever's creed as some of the company. He contended for the existence, and for the moral government, of a Deity. After he left the room, one of the philosophers being asked what he thought of Mr. Hume, replied, that he certainly was a man of an enlarged and liberal turn of mind, and that it was a great pity, that he had not been able wholly to divest himself of superstition, and to shake off the remaining prejudices of his education." *Monthly Review* for August, 1792, p. 375.

Thus, we see, the Atheist accuses the Deist of superstition for believing there is a God; the Deist will accuse the Christian of superstition for believing there is a Saviour; and the Socinian will accuse the Orthodox of superstition for believing the divinity and atonement of that Saviour.

and shining qualifications) surely they labour under a very culpable infatuation of mind, and the word of God seems to leave them without any manner of excuse. Moses, speaking of the advent of Messiah, declares, that God will be highly displeased with those who reject him. *Whoever, says he, will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*⁵

The royal Psalmist also represents the Heathen as opposing the kingdom of David, and of Christ, whom David prefigured, and exhorting them, on pain of the Messias' utmost displeasure, to submit themselves to his dominion:—*Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*⁶ The same sentiment, nearly, only expressed with greater force, occurs in the 110th. psalm:—*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* Indeed this whole psalm seems to be a prediction of our blessed Saviour's victories over the enemies of his church. *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.—The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedeck. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the Heathen, notwithstanding all their opposition,*

⁵Deut. 18. 19.

⁶Ps. 2. 12.

sition, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies: he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

The language of Isaiah is similar:—Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else: I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord, shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.⁷

John the Baptist hath spoken in a stile equally peremptory:—The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.⁸

St. Paul assures us, that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹

St. John is not less positive:—He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.¹⁰

St.

⁷Is. 45. 22—25.

⁸John 3. 35, 36.—⁹2 Thes. 1. 7, 8.—¹⁰1 John 5. 12.

St. Peter confirms the same testimony:—*The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*²

And, lastly, our Saviour himself hath declared the same things upon various occasions:—*God so loved the world, says he, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.*³ It ought, moreover, to be well considered, that his commission to the Apostles when he left our earth was:—*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*⁴

Nothing can be stronger and more absolute than these declarations, all which apply so directly and alarmingly to the Deists of every age and country. Our own nation has produced many, and some of very considerable abilities and attainments. It is impossible not to call to mind, with sincere concern,

² 1 Pet. 4. 17. 18. — ³ John 3. 16—18. — ⁴ Mark 16. 15, 16.

cern, such men as Herbert, Shaftsbury, Chubb, Tindal, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, and others, who have attacked the gospel with all their learning and ingenuity. France,³ we have seen, swarms with Atheists and Deists. It is even said, there are few among that ingenious people, of any consideration, who do believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. The corruption of their religion, the liveliness of their natural tempers, the most artful, insinuating, and poisonous writings of that arch-infidel Voltaire, have, in conjunction, driven the higher ranks of the nation, very generally,

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rally,

³This country has produced a considerable number of very able men in every department of literature. It is a great, enlightened, and powerful nation. The present most horrible and sanguinary convulsions are owing to a variety of causes, and some of them pretty remote. The corruption of the national religion, I apprehend, is the first and greatest cause—the despotic principles of the constitution—the revocation of the edict of Nantes in the year 1685—the bloody wars and enormous expences of the two last kings—the vast debt that was incurred in the late American war—the notions of liberty the soldiery imbibed by mixing with the Americans in that war—the pleasing, yet dangerous writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Abbé Raynal—but—above all,—the judgments of heaven upon the king, nobility, clergy, and gentry of the land, for their treachery, irreligion, hypocrisy, infidelity, and atheism. How the present most cruel and savage struggle will end, God only knows. Let monarchs, however, look at the present state of the king of France, and learn justice and honour to neighbouring nations. And let subjects look at the present situation of many of those men, who betrayed the confidence of the king, and formed the constituent assembly, and know that *there is a God, who judgeth the earth*. The king betrayed us in the business of the American war, and now he is betrayed by his subjects. His friends betrayed the confidence of the king, and now they are given up into the hands of the Jacobins, who have murdered, or banished, many of the most respectable men in the nation,

rally, into downright infidelity. That gospel, however, which they with so much scorn reject, we have seen, pronounces the doom of all such in no very ambiguous language. What allowance may be requisite, in any particular case, is not with us to determine. Of this we may be assured, *the Judge of all the earth will do right*; and no man shall have reason to say, he is cruelly and unjustly treated. Where there is room for apology, that apology shall be accepted, by the indulgent Parent of all his creatures. But surely, *upon the ungodly, who through pride of heart, or in obedience to their unruly passions, cast off the gentle yoke of the Redeemer, he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, this shall be their portion to drink.*

It is evident, therefore, that the situation of Atheists and Deists* is desperate. They have no prospects

*The English language abounds with books of every kind against the Deists. I will take the liberty of putting down the names of a small number for the satisfaction of the less informed Reader, besides those that have already been mentioned in the course of these Strictures. 1. Dr. Clarke on the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation. 2. Dr. Doddridge's Three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity. 3. Mr. Leslie's Short and Easy Method with the Deists. 4. Dr. Leland's View of the Deistical Writers. 5. Dr. Hartley on the Truth of the Christian Religion. 6. Mr. Addison on the Truth of the Christian Religion. 7. Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies. 8. Dr. Allix's Reflections on the Books of the Holy Scripture. 9. Dr. Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, with the Supplement.—Any one of these books (and the number might be increased almost without end) is sufficient to establish the authority of the Christian religion, without having recourse to any other. But, perhaps, Grotius, on the Truth of the Christian religion, is the best single book in any language, upon the subject,

pects whatever of favour from the God who made and the Saviour who redeemed them, but what is founded on his uncovenanted mercy and grace. How far, and to whom, and under what circumstances, this will be exercised, or whether it will be exercised in any cases whatever, we know not. This only we know, that *God is a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he*: And, *being merciful, he will reward every man according to his works. To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will render eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good: for there is no respect of persons with God.*

But then, besides atheistical and deistical persons, we have abundance of others, who profess to believe in God and in Christ, whose religious sentiments are as opposite to each other as the east is from the west. And what is very much to be observed, is, that the more wild and extravagant their opinions, the more dogmatical and overbearing they usually are in enforcing the truth and importance of them. The German Anabaptists, we have seen, went astonishing lengths in error and delusion.⁵ The Fifth-Monarchy-Men,⁶ and French Prophets,⁷ were

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equally

⁵See p. 11;—19—⁶See p. 19, 20—⁷See p. 24—26.

equally wild and enthusiastic. Asgill¹ and Buchan² seem not to have been much more sober-minded. And what shall we say to the highly illuminated Swedish Baron?³ Toplady and White were in opposite extremes, one being for a very partial redemption, and the other for universal restitution; and yet they were both perfectly right, if their own account of things may be credited.⁴ Then comes in honest Thayer,⁵ who from a Presbyterian clergyman was converted to be a Roman Catholic. Great as the difference is between his former and present self, he considers his new system as perfectly right, while all the rest of Christendom are fatally mistaken; or, if there is any hope of their salvation, it is only in the uncovenanted mercies of God. Next come forward Whiston, Price, and other advocates for the doctrine of Arianism.⁶ They put in their joint claim to the exclusive possession of evangelical

¹ See p. 26. — ² See p. 27. — ³ See p. 29—31. —

⁴ See p. 28, 29. — ⁵ See p. 32—35.

⁶ We have a considerable variety of books in our language written against Arianism. Dr. Waterland's Eight Sermons at Lady Moyer's Lecture, with his Vindication of Christ's divinity, and Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, are all very valuable. Berriman's Eight Sermons at the same Lecture give a very clear Historical account of the Trinity. Dr. Knight's Eight Sermons on the same occasion may be read with advantage. Mr. Jones' Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity is valuable. Of small treatises upon the subject, Bishop Horne's two Sermons, before mentioned, and Mr. Hey's Short Defence of the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, are as good as any I have seen. Abundance more books might be added in defence of this great doctrine, the divinity of our blessed Saviour, but the above appear to me quite sufficient against the Arian view of things.

evangelical truth. Yet even these differ considerably from each other in their views of the person and office of the Redeemer: For Whiston equally with Clarke seems to have contended for the deity and atonement of Christ, in a certain qualified sense, at least: Whereas Dr. Price, and most of the Arians of the present day, appear not to hold any thing more in the character of Messiah, than some pre-existent, super-angelical nature. The former are now sometimes distinguished by the name of high, and the latter by the name of low, Arians. These, however, notwithstanding this great and important difference, were both extremely positive that they were right. And Dr. Price has the temerity to treat his great master, the profoundly learned Dr. Samuel Clarke, with some degree of superiority, because he was inclined to pay too much honour to the divine Redeemer.*

After the Arians in this country had tried their strength with the Orthodox for many years, and

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with

Against the Socinians may be read—Allix's Judgment of the antient Jewish Church—Lellie's Dialogues on the Socinian Controversy—Dr. Randolph's Vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity, and his other pieces on the same subject—Dr. Burgh's Scriptural Confutation, and the Sequel, against Mr. Lindsey—Archbishop Tillotson's five Sermons on the Divinity, Incarnation, and Satisfaction of Christ.—To these may be added Mr. Hawker's Sermons on the divinity of Christ, just published, which I have before recommended. The serious and candid inquirer after truth will find more or less satisfaction in every one of the above authors. Some of them appear to me to be absolutely conclusive upon the subjects on which they treat.

*See his Sermons, p. 87.

with various success, the disciples of Socinus made their appearance in arms. Dr. Priestley⁵ is now deservedly considered as being placed at the head of them. Both the Arians and Orthodox, we have already had an opportunity of seeing, are opposed by him, and opposed with great zeal and ability. The Doctor was first an high, now he is a low, Socinian, verging nearly to Deism. Indeed he has veered about through every point of the compass from high Calvinism to low Socinianism. He treats all who presume to differ from him on the great questions in debate, concerning the nature and offices of the Son of God, as dangerously mistaken; and he expects to stand before the judgment seat of Christ clothed in his own righteousness, and involved in his own virtue.⁶

Now,

⁵The Doctor is not only a philosopher and divine, but has for some years embarked on the wide and tempestuous ocean of worldly politics. He is mighty zealous, we have seen, to subvert the present constitution of his country, (the excellence of which is the admiration of the most enlightened of the French patriots, and founded on the wisdom and experience of all past ages) and substitute some pretty snug thing of his own forming in its room. One would have less to object to the Doctor, if he only proposed such improvements in the existing state of things as he thought necessary; if he were desirous of dressing off some of the gothic protuberances of our political structure and modernizing the stately building. But what shall we say to a man, who would erase to its lowest foundations York Minster, or Westminster Abbey, under a pretence of their not being exactly in the taste of the present day; destroy, in so doing, many thousands of men, and sink many millions of money, in order to erect a smart, neat-looking, modern, conventicle on the scite of them?

⁶*Mêa virtute me involvo.* Hor.—See the 133 page of these Strictures for the Doctor's opinion on our acceptance with God.

I have often thought, there is a striking similarity between the late Mr. Whiston and the present Dr. Priestley, as well as between

Now, under all these various, jarring, and contradictory opinions concerning the nature of Christ, and the doctrines of redemption; what is a serious

N 4

observer

the latter of these gentlemen and Voltaire. Both men of considerable learning, great integrity, and much zeal, they are equally precipitate in their decisions on men, books, and opinions, and equally defective in solidity of judgment. Mr. Whitaker in his "Origin of Arianism Disclosed," lately published, has given us a very affecting picture of the infirmity of the human mind in the various revolutions of sentiment through which the former of these well-meaning gentlemen circulated in the course of a pretty long life; and has compared the two together with great vivacity. The comparison is worthy of attention. And as Mr. Whitaker's book is a large price, and consequently can come into but few hands, I will transcribe the substance of what he has said upon these two eccentric geniuses in this note. The Reader will hence see, that the greatest pretenders to truth are sometimes the least to be depended upon. Men truly wise are modest and diffident.—

"Let us mark," says this lively writer, "the progress of his Arian life, to shew the gradual advances of heresy, in this weak and worthy man. And the memoirs of his life, as written by himself, will prove the most powerful antidote that we can apply, to the venom of his Arian opinions.

"In June 1709 he first began to be heard of, in that grand center of all national intelligence, London; as a reputed Arian. In the August following, he offered a small Essay on the Apostolical Constitutions, to the licencer of the press at Cambridge; and was refused the licence. In 1709 he actually published a sermon, against the eternity of Hell-torments. So variously was the spirit of error already at work, in his mind! In 1710 he boldly asserted the Apostolical Constitutions, to be of equal authority with the four Gospels themselves; and a tract included in them, and called the Doctrine of the Apostles, to be the most sacred of the Canonical Books. So rapidly was he running his career of wildness! But, in 1712, he published in favour of the Anabaptists; the next year, printed a Book of Common Prayer, that had been reformed the backward way into Anabaptism and Arianism; and two years afterward, set up a meeting-house for the use of it: having strangely drawn up his liturgy, before he had provided his church. All this was surely sufficient for one heretick. But the stone of Sisy-

observer to do, that he may not miscarry in the business of salvation, but arrive at the knowledge and experience of saving truth? This is a question of vast importance; and ought to be answered with all possible care.

First,

“ thus could never stand still. In 1723 he published a dissertation, to prove the Canticles *not* a canonical Book of Scripture; in 1727 another, to prove the Apocryphal Book of Baruch, canonical; in the same year another, to prove the Epistle of Baruch to the nine tribes and a half, equally canonical; in the *same* year another, to prove the second Book of Esdras, equally canonical; in the *same* year another, to prove Eighteen Psalms of a second Solomon, equally canonical; in the *same* year another, to prove the Book of Enoch, equally canonical; in the *same* year another, to prove those Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs, equally canonical; and another in the very *same* year, to prove an Epistle of the Corinthians to St. Paul, with St. Paul’s Answer to it, equally canonical. With so much labour of spirit, and so much debility of mind, was this respectable heretick rolling the stone up the hill.

“ With many a weary step and many a groan,

“ Up the high hill he heaves the huge round stone;

“ The huge round stone, resulting with a bound,

“ Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground.

“ Again the restless orb his toil renews,

“ Dust mounts in clouds, and sweat descends in dews.

“ In 1745, he published his *Primitive* New Testament in English, in four parts; and added a page at the end, exhibiting the *titles* of the *rest* of the Books of the New Testament, *not yet known* by the *body* of Christians. Among *these* were specified, *besides* the works above recited, the Epistles of Timothy to *Diognetus*, and the *Homily*, the two Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians, Josephus’s *Homily* concerning Hades, the Epistles of Barnabas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. He thus, according to *his own* enumeration, enlarged the number of the canonical books in the New Testament, from twenty-seven to—fifty-six. And he seems to me from all, with every degree of candor that can be shown him, to have done as some Eastern Saints are said to do; to have run round in a circle, till he found his brains begin to whirl; and then to have mistaken the giddiness, for inspiration.

First, then, with respect to the doctrines of natural religion, let him attentively consider the frame of the world in general; the frame of his own nature in particular;

" I take no pleasure in exposing the strange eccentricities, of this very amiable and very learned man. My good-nature recoils at it. But it becomes requisite, for the sake of the truth. In a state of probation like the present, the milder virtues must often be sacrificed to the sterner, and man give way to God. I therefore proceed to observe additionally, that in 1749, he gradually reached the highest point of *heretical* perfection.

" He gravely asserted first, that neither a Bishop, a Presbyter, nor a Deacon ought to be more than—once married; that Primitive Christianity also forbid, either Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons, *to marry at all after their ordination*; and that, in the days of the Apostles, a *fourth* marriage was entirely rejected, even in the *laity*. He also ventured upon the bold presumption, of ascertaining the very year according to the Scripture prophecies, for certain events of the highest consequence to the world; and, such was the ingenuous simplicity of the man, was confident enough to name a year *at no great distance*. Mr. Whiston, he says himself, from the same prophecies still foretells, —the Jews are to be RESTORED TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY, —in or before what year, does the reader think?—even before one which *has long passed over our heads*. This throws an air of infinite absurdity, over all that he says. They are to rebuild their Temple, and the Millennium is to commence, before—A. D. 1766. In A. D. 1764, he adds,—Ezekiel's temple is to be cleansed. And I verily believe, he assures us in another place, Providence is—NOW BEGINNING TO SET UP THE MILLENNIUM. We thus hear the Prophet, most unfortunately foretelling magnificent events, and assigning specific periods to them; when the periods have been already come, and the events are still behind.

" But such a spirit as Mr. Whiston's could not stop here. He had nearly run the whole round of theological absurdity. One line only was left untried. This he passed, and completed the circle. In the very *same* year he rose to the audacious licence, of asserting the **FALSHOOD** of some things in St. Paul's Epistles. His words are these. I cite them, that I may not injure him. What St. Paul says to the Jewish converts, in his Epistle to the Romans, about Original Sin;—seems to have been no part of CHRIST'S REVELATION to him. What are they then

particular; the sentiments of all nations; and the voice of his own conscience. Let him examine the heavens, and the earth, and every object within his reach. In these various works of nature are clearly displayed the existence, intelligence, wisdom, power, and goodness of the Divine Being, with many of the duties and obligations of man. In this conclusion Christians of every denomination are sufficiently well agreed.

Secondly,

“ in the name of Christianity and of Common sense? They are,
 “ Mr. Whiston tells us, rather certain reasonings of HIS OWN,
 “ accommodated to the WEAK Roman Jews at that time only.
 “ He then calls them, these STRANGE and WEAK reasonings.
 “ St. Paul, he adds, might do this the rather, because he never
 “ appears to have designed such occasional Epistles, as this
 “ to the Romans, for systems or standards of Christianity to the
 “ churches; which indeed had been LONG BEFORE settled upon
 “ SURER foundations and FULLER instructions, as they stand in
 “ the ONLY AUTHENTICK system of Christianity, the Aposto-
 “ lical Constitutions. And he finally subjoins, that, if, after all,
 “ any think that this my opinion *takes away* the *strict inspiration*
 “ of Paul’s Epistles, which they *suppose* of dangerous consequence
 “ to Christianity; I CONFESS it *does* imply, that under what de-
 “ gree of divine conduct or wisdom soever Paul wrote his Epistles,
 “ —yet is THAT degree to be esteemed INFERIOR to what
 “ OUGHT to be PROPERLY CALLED INSPIRATION, such as
 “ the prophets were under in the reception of their prophecies;
 “ which PROPER INSPIRATION, I take to be here GROUND-
 “ LESS, and NEVER PRETENDED to by ANY WRITERS of the
 “ New Testament, *excepting the prophetick parts* of *Hermas*, in his
 “ admirable visions, and the *prophetick parts* of *St. John*, in his
 “ *no less* admirable Revelation. We here see the wilderness of er-
 “ ror, by its own luxuriance of growth, entangling itself more
 “ and more, and shooting more and more savage before us at eve-
 “ ry advance. With a temerity that is the result of insensibility,
 “ and the attendant upon unthinkingness; Mr. Whiston asserted
 “ the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, to have some things in
 “ it, which *seem* to have been no part of Christ’s Revelation to
 “ him. Here, surely, even the foot of injudiciousness and pre-

Secondly, Let him diligently study the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In them are fully made known all the moral as well as natural perfections of the Deity. The glorious scheme of redemption by the Son of God is therein clearly displayed; whatever is necessary to be believed,

“sumption will stop. But Mr. Whiston does not. He goes forward to *defend* this wild dictate of heretical pravity. He distinguishes between the inspiration of the prophet, and the inspiration of the teacher. That alone he will allow to be proper inspiration. The other therefore is not a proper one, and only such as admits of strange and weak reasonings. He thus defends his absurd position, by—doubling and weak redoubling it. He defends it, by—adding tenfold more to it. He involves ALL the Epistles of St. Paul, in the same extravagance of censure. He even goes on in the presumption of blindness, and without seeming to know what his hand is executing at the moment; to involve ALL THE OTHER Epistles, to involve the very ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, and to involve the very GOSPELS themselves, in his ample vortex of reprobation. And what understanding is there among my readers, but must spurn with contempt at such a violent precipitation of folly; and what heart is there, but must sigh with compassion over such an evident sweep of madness?

“Mr. Whiston came at last, we see, to that grand consummation of the lunacies of heresy, to which we have seen the present Heresiarch of the Dissension, Dr. PRIESTLEY, since come. The Apostle PAUL, says the Doctor, especially if he be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, has STRAINED VERY MUCH BY THE FORCE OF IMAGINATION, to reconcile the Jews to the Christian religion; by pointing out the analogies which he IMAGINED the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion bore, to something in Christianity. Dr. Priestley thus *insinuates* his disbelief in the inspiration of St. Paul, at the beginning of his work. But he *speaks out*, near the conclusion of it. I think I have *shown*, he then adds in a reference to some other work of his, that the Apostle Paul OFTEN REASONS INCONCLUSIVELY; and *therefore* that he wrote AS ANY OTHER PERSON, of his turn of mind and thinking, and in his situation, WOULD HAVE WRITTEN without ANY PARTICULAR INSPIRATION. In this manner did Dr. Priestley, like Mr. Whiston, *begin* with denying the inspiration of St. Paul only.

lieved, known, and done, towards the attainment of everlasting salvation. If he is still at a loss for the meaning of the sacred writings upon any of those topics which seem important; if he is puzzled and perplexed with the contradictory assertions of any of our flaming pretenders to reason and philosophy,* let him not rashly give up all religion, turn universal sceptic, and conclude there is no such thing as truth to be found; but let him rather betake

“ And, like him too, he soon stepped forward to deny equally the
 “ inspiration of *all* the writers in the New Testament. I have frequently declared myself, he says in a passage as comprehensive
 “ as it is confident, NOT TO BE A BELIEVER in the INSPIRATION, of the EVANGELISTS and APOSTLES as WRITERS.
 “ And the *progression* of the audaciousness unites with the termination of it, to show in whose trammels this daring son of liberty
 “ is servilely pacing all the while. The Doctor and Mr. Whiston, indeed, have many features of similitude in their character. Eminent in some branches of literature, they had been both bred
 “ up in the very bosom of religiousness. They had been both educated, in that great and elementary principle of the Gospel, the doctrine of the Trinity. They both recoiled from the faith
 “ of their education, threw off the elementary principle, and deserted over to the army of the Arians. They then had the wild
 “ assurance, to pretend to press the Fathers, those strongest and most strenuous champions for orthodoxy, into the very cause of
 “ heresy. Each too has been very like the other, in confusedness of thinking, and in distractedness of reasoning, upon the
 “ subject. They have gone on, equal in the love of writing, and in the lust of publishing, upon it; still persisting, however confuted; still muffling themselves up from conviction, in their own
 “ cloudiness of discernment; and still screening themselves from shame, in their own effrontery of writing about it. And they
 “ have dreadfully united at last, in this high note upon the scale of absurdity, at which Heresy is mounting up into Deism; that
 “ St. Paul, that all the Apostles, that all the Evangelists, reasoned at times as weakly and as wildly as themselves.”

Page 472—481.—For proof of all these assertions, see Whiston's Memoirs of himself, *passim*.

“If he has any doubt upon his mind concerning the authenticity of these divine writings, let him read carefully Grotius on the truth

take himself in earnest prayer to the Almighty, and a thorough examination of the *whole* word of God, comparing one part with another, *spiritual things with spiritual*; and let him not pin his faith on any man's sleeve whatever. Let him recollect, on the
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of the Christian religion, which is well calculated to give satisfaction on the subject it treats. Various other excellent books, we have before observed, have been written with the same view; but no single treatise, which I have seen, appears to me equal to this. To capable Readers, indeed, Butler's Analogy is one of the most satisfactory books that ever was composed. It scarce can be too strongly recommended. No book ever gave so much ease and satisfaction to my mind under the various fluctuations it has experienced from reading the contradictory and plausible opinions of men. If we would believe the Atheist, he will needs persuade us he is right. Listen to the Deist for a while, and you would swear he is right. One attempts to laugh us out of our God, and the other out of our Saviour. Next comes the tribe of strong believers, with imagination warm and judgment scant. They are happy enough to see little or no difficulty in the scheme which they have embraced (if by chance they have any scheme,) while the opinions of others they judge horribly wicked and absurd. These are all absolutely right in their own opinion, having no spot of error and delusion. The Arian and Socinian then advance upon us with their weighty reasons. They insist there is a God. They allow there is a Saviour. But, of the latter description, Dr. Priestley, Goliath like, comes forward, and challenges the armies of this Divine and Atoning Saviour, to shew that he is any more than a mere, weak, frail, peccable man like ourselves. I read, or think I read, a very different account of his person and nature in the pages of divine revelation; but the Doctor will persuade us these things are not so; that our eyes deceive us; and that we are all dangerously mistaken. Moreover, I have been accustomed to believe that I certainly have a soul within this earthly shrine called the body. The Doctor says, however, it is no such thing; we are nothing more than simple matter, without any higher and purer principle. Now, I say, under all these and many more perplexities of mind, which I have for upwards of twenty years experienced, *Bishop Butler's Analogy*, has given me more satisfaction than any single book which I have ever read. I am confident I have a *soul*, and a *divine* and *atoning* Redeemer, maugre all any man can advance to the contrary.

one hand, how God hath threatened judicial blindness to the disobedient, proud, conceited, and high-minded; and on the other, what gracious promises he hath made to the modest, humble, and obedient enquirer after truth.* — *It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:—The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart; and thou shalt grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in the darkness.*†

Again:

* All the real principles of the gospel are perfectly consistent with the purest and most perfect reason of man. Some of them may indeed surpass our highest powers, but none of them are, or can be, contrary thereto. Is any thing more agreeable to sound reason than to believe the declarations of heaven, on subjects where we have no natural means of being informed? If then God hath made his will known unto us by Moses and the Prophets, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, that will ought to be the *ABSOLUTE RULE* of our conduct—our belief, thoughts, words, and actions. This is perfectly consonant to the best human reason. If therefore we treat with slight and neglect that will; if we daringly erect any other scheme of things beside or in opposition; if we rashly presume to think and act contrary to the divine plan; and say in the spirit of Pharaoh, Who is the Lord, and what is his will that I should obey them? I know not the Lord, neither will I regard his authority. If this should be the conduct of any of his creatures, it is most evidently consistent with the purest reason, that he should treat such persons with due severity, harden their hearts, and suffer them to plunge themselves into all manner of error and delusion. This has been the conduct of the Almighty in all ages. And it appears to me infinitely reasonable it should be so. *Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.* Every man living should therefore be extremely cautious to submit his own will, his own understanding, and his own reason, as well as his passions, to the will, understanding, and reason of God.

† Deut. 28. 15, 28, 29.

Again:—*The meek will be guide in judgment: the meek will be teach his way.*

*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant.**

Again:—*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.**

Again:—*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

*The froward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous.**

Again:—*None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.**

Again:—*Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.**

Again:—*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.**

Lastly:—*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.—Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.**

From

⁹Pf 25. 9. 14.—¹Ibid. 119. 98, 99, 100, 104.—²Prov. 3. 5, 6, 32.—³Dan. 12. 10.—⁴Hol. 14. 9.—⁵John 7. 17.—⁶James 1. 5, 17.

From these scriptural declarations it manifestly appears, that certain moral and religious qualifications are essentially necessary to the attainment of saving truth. The bible* must be diligently read, and read with proper dispositions, before any man, however great, learned, and externally moral, can justly expect to be led into an acquaintance with the interior of religion. Much may be done in the theory of it without such a state of mind; but nothing to any saving purpose. A careless, desultory, or self-conceited perusal of the bible will not do. There must be a sober, serious sense of things; an earnest concern for salvation, and a resolute determination to walk in the path of piety and virtue. There must be, moreover, earnest prayer to God, that he will vouchsafe to illuminate the mind, and lead it into all truth. And this must be persevered in from the time of our setting out in the ways of piety and goodness to the end of our lives; otherwise the veil that was once removed will soon return upon the mind, and all the inward power, love, and freedom, which it once enjoyed will be lost. Nay, even the grateful relish and quick discernment of religious truths that it formerly possessed shall be succeeded by a kind of spiritual slumber, and

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*Some of our minute philosophers, and superficial dabblers in learning and religion, treat the bible with most inexcusable impropriety. Sometimes they pretend that one thing is wrong, and then another. One while Moses is mistaken; then the Prophets are called to an account. Now Christ makes a slip; and now the Apostles. The two genealogies of Christ by St. Matthew and St.

loss of all taste for religion, and the things that make for our everlasting peace. This view of the matter being inexpressibly important; I will call to the Reader's attention two or three more passages of holy scripture, which seem to justify all that is here advanced. *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

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Luke are a grievous stumbling block to some; the difficulties attending the death of Judas, the traitor, and the different narrations of the resurrection of Christ to others. Indeed, in a book so ancient as the bible, and consisting of such a variety of matter, men of light, frothy, and captious minds, will always find abundant room for displaying their perverse and ill-judged wit. To such unhappy persons, however, I would seriously recommend the late Bishop Horne's Letters on Infidelity, and the present Bishop Watson's Address to the Sceptics and Infidels of the age, in his excellent Apology for Christianity, addressed to Mr. Gibbon. These two valuable publications, the former in substance, and the latter entire, may be met with in my Sacred Literature, vol. 1. p. 396—457.

I would, moreover, recommend to these Bible-cavillers a sober consideration of the following testimonies. They ought to make men declare themselves modestly at least:—

1. The noble Pius Mirandula was accounted the best linguist and scholar of his age, and yet, after he had run through innumerable volumes, he rested in the Bible as the only book wherein he had found out the true eloquence and wisdom.

2. Sir Matthew Hale, in a letter to one of his sons, told him, I have been somewhat acquainted with men and books: I have had long experience in learning, and in the world: there is no book like the Bible, for excellent learning, wisdom, and use; and it is want of understanding in them who think or say otherwise.

3. The famous John Selden, one of the most eminent philosophers, and most learned men of his time, who had read as much perhaps as ever man did, and collected books and manuscripts upon all ancient subjects, declared to archbishop Usher towards the latter end of his days, that he could rest his soul on no book, save the Scriptures.

4. The honourable Robert Boyle wrote a whole volume in praise of the style and language of holy Scripture, and calls the Bible, "That matchless book;" and declares, that it is impossible we can study it too much, or esteem it too highly.

*Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.**

Again:—*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.†*

Again:—

5. Rousseau, notwithstanding his infidelity, declared to a friend—I will confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures!

6. Count Struensee, prime minister of Denmark, declared, when recovered from his infidelity—I own with joy, I find Christianity more amiable, the more I get acquainted with it.

7. Sir Isaac Newton, entered further into the depths of philosophy than ever mortal did before or since, and yet he accounted the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy. And, as a proof of his respect for them, when Dr. Halley his friend, but yet a professed infidel, was throwing out some indecent reflections upon Christianity, Sir Isaac stopp'd him short, and address'd him in these or the like words—Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, because that is a subject you have studied, and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for you have not studied it: I have; and am certain you know nothing of the matter.

8. To a young man desirous of information Mr. Lock gave this advice—Study the holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.

After such declarations as these from such men, what shall we think of those contemptible sceptics, who are continually disturbing every company into which they are admitted with their profane and low-witted sneers against Moses and the Prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles? Having renounced their baptismal engagements, like Julian, the Apostate; like him they will ere long be compelled to exclaim—*Vicisti, O Galilæe!*

Again:—If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Again:—Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.†

And again:—Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.‡

Now, let any man judge, after reading these several passages of the word of God, whether there be not some danger of miscarrying in the all-important business of salvation; and whether every person ought not, therefore, to be upon his guard, on the one hand, against an immoral conduct, and on the other, against vile seducers and destructive principles: for wrong principles of religion are generally productive of a loose and irreligious conduct; or a vain, conceited, and haughty state of mind, utterly inconsistent with every just expectation of favour and salvation with God.

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SECTION

* 2 Cor. 4. 3. 4.—† 2 Cor. 11. 13—15.—‡ Mat. 7. 13, 14.

§—“ My long-sufferance and my day of grace

“ They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;

SECTION XIV.

IF, however, after all his prayers and endeavours in searching the word of God, the enquirer after truth still continues doubtful concerning any of the capital doctrines of the gospel; if he is haunted with fearful apprehensions lest he should not understand the scriptures aright, let him have recourse to the immediate followers of our Saviour and his Apostles. Let him consult their writings, see how they *unanimously* understood the word of God upon the subjects in question, and abide by their determination. This is the rule laid down by many of the Ancients; and not a few of our best modern writers have given their sanction to it. Bildad in the book of Job says to his afflicted friend, *Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age; and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; for we are but of yesterday and know nothing.*

So Moses advised the Israelites, as a remedy against their future infidelity, that they would look back into the history of their ancestors, and see what wonderful things God had done for them:

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“ But hard be harden'd, blind be blinded more,
 “ That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;
 “ And none but such from mercy I exclude.”

Paradise Lost, b. 3. l. 198—202.

Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father and he will shew thee; thy elders and they will tell thee. And in like manner the prophet Jeremiah: Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

The Fathers of the Christian church have also recommended a similar method of proceeding in the investigation of religious truth; "That is more true which is first," saith Tertullian, "and that is first which is from the beginning." Again:—"I say that that is true whatsoever it is that was first; that is, spurious, whatsoever came in afterwards." And again, with respect to the order of bishops:—"Let them therefore exhibit the origin of their churches, let them display the order of their bishops, descending from the beginning through their successors, that the first bishop may have some author and predecessor, either from the Apostles or apostolic men, who also have persevered in communion with the Apostles." Irenæus likewise appeals to catholic tradition:—

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* Contra Marcionem, lib. 4. cap. 5.

† Adversus Praxeam, cap. 2.

‡ De Præscript. c. 32.

dition:—"In every church," saith this learned and pious Father, "it is in the power of every one who wishes to see the truth, to inspect the tradition of the Apostles which is displayed throughout the whole world. And we can specify the names of those persons who were instituted bishops by the Apostles in the churches, and also their successors even to our own times, all who taught no such thing, neither knew they the doctrines which are raved upon by these (heretics)."

St. Augustine has the same sentiment:—"That which the universal church holds, and which has not been instituted by councils, but always retained, is rightly believed to have come in by no other means but by apostolic authority."

But the excellent Vincentius, in the fifth century, hath treated upon this question at large. And the rule which he hath laid down, and indeed which they laid down before him, is an admirable one, and ought never to be lost sight of in all our researches into the original doctrines of divine revelation.—"I have been at great pains," says that valuable writer, "and often made it my particular business to consult very many persons of the highest rank for piety and learning, about a certain

^oAdv. hæ. lib. 3. cap. 3.

ⁱDe bap. contra Don. lib. 4. cap. 24.

“ certain general rule to distinguish the true catho-
“ lic faith from the depravations of heresy. And
“ after repeated enquiries, the sum of all their an-
“ swers amounted to this, That if I, or any other
“ Christian, would discover the artifice of growing
“ heretics, and keep out of their snares, and con-
“ tinue perfectly sound in the right faith, the way,
“ by God’s grace, is to secure it upon these two
“ foundations: First, Upon the authority of ho-
“ ly scripture; and after that, Secondly, Upon
“ the tradition of the catholic church.” And then
he continues:—

“ But here, perhaps, a man may ask this questi-
“ on; Since the canon of scripture is compleat,
“ and more than sufficient in every respect, what
“ need is there for adding the sense of the catholic
“ church to such a perfect rule? To which
“ question I answer, that there is good reason for
“ such addition; because the sacred writings, hav-
“ ing a sublime sense, all understandings cannot
“ reach it alike; but one expounds the divine oracles
“ after this manner, and another after that; inso-
“ much, that there are as many opinions about the
“ true meaning, as there are expositors. For in-
“ stance, Novatianus interprets one way, Pho-
“ tinus another, Sabellius another, Donatus ano-
“ ther, Arius another, Eunomius, Macedonius,
“ Apollinaris, Priscillianus, Jovianus, Pelagius,
“ Celestius, each another; and, in fine, Nestori-

“ us another. And therefore, under so great difficulties, in such a perplexity of various error, I hold it extremely necessary to apply the sense of the catholic church to the scriptures, as a rule to a line, and as a clue to conduct us in this labyrinth of opinions.”

“ And

“ It is just the same in the present day. The Arians and Socinians, the Sabellians and Trinitarians, the Calvinists and Arminians, &c. &c. all differ very materially from one another in their religious opinions; and yet all profess to be right. Every party too has men of considerable abilities to espouse its cause. What course then must serious men take under these contradictory views of things? I humbly conceive, the plan pointed out in these Strictures is not only the most judicious, but the only one that can be adopted with any hopes of satisfaction. The Bible is the rule, and the only rule of religious truth. Apply the Father's to that rule, and abide the consequence. If after this we still retain different opinions, there is no remedy. We must agree to disagree; defend our sentiments in the best manner we can; and leave the cause to God. In the mean time, we ought to consider one another as fellow creatures, and treat each other with kindness, forbearance, and charity; doing good in every way that circumstances will admit.

“ In this our transient day of pain and grief,

“ Sprung from the same *GREAT SIRE*, so let us live

“ As owning the fraternal tie divine,

“ And lighten mutually each other's load.”

All this seems to me perfectly consistent with fidelity to what we conceive to be the truth. Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, it is confessed, I have here used with great freedom. I have thought it my duty so to do. They have treated others with equal freedom. They have thought it their duty so to do. I am so far, however, from entertaining any malevolence to these worthy Gentlemen, that I respect them highly, and should be very glad to see them, to converse with them, and to render them any service in my power. The men I love. Their religious opinions I detest. In our morality we are agreed. In our divinity we differ. I pray God the virtue of that atoning blood, without which there can be no forgiveness, and which they with scorn reject, may be applied to our mutual salvation. If its efficacy extends to helpless infants and virtuous Heathens, may it not be extended also to all serious and conscientious men under well meaning error and delusion? How this may be I cannot tell. God only knows how far his uncovenanted mercy

“ And for us who are in the bosom of the catholic church, it ought to be our first and principal care to chuse such doctrines, as we find to have been believed in all places, at all times, and by all the faithful. For there is nothing truly and properly catholic, but what truly and fully comprehends all these. And we are thus catholic when we follow *universality*, *antiquity*, and, *unanimous consent*. But we follow *universality*, when we profess that only to be the true faith, which is professed by the church all the world over. In like manner we are followers of *antiquity*, when we religiously adhere to that sense of scripture, which manifestly obtained amongst the holy fathers, our predecessors. And lastly, we follow *consent*, when we embrace the definitions and opinions of almost all, if not all, the bishops and teachers in the ancient church.”

may extend. If I do err, let me, however, err on the amiable side. Bigots of any denomination I approve not. A candid and sincere Deist, if such an one there exists, who professes to love and seek truth, is, in my estimation, a far more desirable character, than a sour, morose, and angry bigot, even of my own sentiments, who believes through thick and thin, and can tell you neither the why nor the wherefore of his creed.

“ Let not this weak, unknowing hand,
“ Presume thy bolts to throw,
“ And deal damnation round the land
“ On each I judge thy foe.
“ If I am right, thy grace impart
“ Still in the right to stay;
“ If I am wrong, O teach my heart
“ To find that better way.

‘Commonitory concerning the Rule of Faith.

The method of proceeding in our investigation of religious truth, so strongly recommended by this pious Father, is what has been pursued by all the most deep and successful theological writers of every denomination. It is the very best human wit ever invented, and appears to me capable of ascertaining the great leading doctrines of the gospel with a degree of precision little short of demonstration. Our excellent Reformers, Cranmer and Ridley, were very sensible of this, and therefore kept close to the decisions of these great and learned men. Erasmus performed a service extremely useful to the church of Christ, and gained immortal honour, by his unwearied labour in the writings of these holy Fathers. Since his time, by the concurrence of a variety of circumstances, the works of many of them have fallen into considerable disrepute. This is the case more especially among the various Sectarists of the present and last age. For as their peculiarities in doctrine, or discipline, or both, will not stand the test of these early writers, it has been the endeavour of several of their authors to represent the Fathers in a disadvantageous point of view, that so their testimony, on subjects unfavourable to the dissenting cause, might be rendered of no weight. It was the same with some of the Roman Catholics at the Reformation. When they found that

“ Teach me to feel another’s woe,
“ To hide the fault I see;
“ That mercy I to others shew,
“ That mercy shew me.”

that the Protestants turned the writings of the Fathers against them; they set themselves to discredit the validity of their testimony.^a Thus both one and the other, for the sake of promoting that particular party in which they were embarked, would have destroyed the credit of those great luminaries in the church, to whom every party is under such vast obligations, even for the preservation of the word of God itself. Far otherwise, however, it is with the best of our own theological writers. They put the holy scriptures in their proper place, but yet in such a manner as to pay all due respect to the successors of our Saviour and his Apostles.

And this it is which has given them that great and decided superiority over all other authors on most polemical subjects. I need only instance in the writings of the two celebrated Bishops of St. David's, doctors Bull and Horsley. It is hardly possible to conceive victories more compleat than those they have obtained over their opposers on the subject of ecclesiastical antiquity. Dr. Priestley,^b in particular, whatever fame he may have acquired in philosophical experiments, is a mere child on this question, when compared with these two Divines.

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^aThis was particularly the case with Petavius and Huetius. See Horsley's Tracts, p. 59.

^bThis learned gentleman professes to be a sincere lover of truth, and yet he is continually attacking the weakest and most indefensible of the positions of his opponents, passing over those which are more conclusive. This is neither candid nor consistent with the

There are many other of our Theologians who have appeared in the same cause with great and deserved credit. Bishops Jewel, Pearson, Beveridge, Stillingfleet, and Fell, Doctors Waterland, Hicks, Allix, and Grabe, Messrs. Leslie, Reeves, Bingham, Nelson, and others, were profoundly skilled in Christian antiquity, and applied their knowledge to very valuable purposes. It is to be lamented, that pursuits of this kind should be so uncommon among Christians. The Clergy of the church of England, especially, might labour in this province with great advantage to the public. And every one who has got a tongue to speak, and an hand to write, should contribute his best endeavours towards calling their attention, and the attention

character of a sincere lover of truth. I have often been struck with this conduct of the Doctor in perusing his various compositions, and could produce several instances. See Jesse's Defence of the Church, p. 82. where this charge against him is considered more in detail.

*There is a fine exhortation to the study of the ancient Christian Fathers in the conclusion of the learned and excellent Dr. Cave's Prolegomena to his *Historia Literaria*, a part of which I will transcribe in this note from the translation of Dr. Priestley in his *Defences of Unitarianism* for the years 1788 and 1789. Having shewn the importance of these studies with respect to the Catholics, he adds—"Nor are new arguments wanting to the prosecution of these studies, especially from the unhappy itch of heterodoxy in persons of our own age, that has revived so many ancient heresies, which had been constantly condemned by the church. The disciples of Arius, or rather of Photinus, are extending themselves every where. Seeing their cause condemned by the tribunal of the primitive church, they attack antiquity itself, and trample upon the venerable witnesses of the primitive faith.

"The Nicene creed is a constant beam in the eyes of these men, and they treat Athanasius, Hilary, and the other champi-

tion of all the professors of the gospel, from modern novelties to the venerable works of these great and holy men. No writings in the world are so worthy of our study as theirs. For, with all their blemishes and defects, they come the nearest in excellence and importance to the bible, that grand charter of all our future hopes and expectations. These are no private and peculiar opinions; they are the sentiments of men the most serious and competent to judge. I have produced several valuable testimonies of this kind in another work,* to which the Reader might be referred; but as this publication

"ons of it, worse than dogs or serpents. They, however, boast of
"their antiquity, but it is the offspring of the old serpent. They
"have their Fathers; but whom? Ebion, Cerinthus, Symmachus,
"Theodotion, Paulus Samosatensis, Photinus, and others. These
"they boast of as their predecessors, and the fathers of their faith.
"As to the catholic writers, they either reject them, elude the
"force of their arguments by sophistry, or, what is more extraordinary,
"endeavour to draw them over to their own party.

"Our studious youth, therefore, must be exhorted to be on
"the watch, and must apply with all their might to the works of
"the Ancients; that, protected by these arms, they may repel
"the attacks of their adversaries, answer their sophistry, and successfully
"defend the cause of the catholic, and consequently that
"of the English, church. *Stand ye in the way and see, and ask for
"the old paths; where is the good way, and walk therein.* Jer.
"6. 16. These writings will shew us the lurking holes of the
"serpent. These will bring us to the very fountain of truth.

"I shall conclude with an excellent passage from Tertullian:
"If these things be so, it is plain whatever opinion agrees with
"the apostolic churches, where our faith originated, it is to be
"considered as true; since they, no doubt, hold what the church
"received from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ, and
"Christ from God. And every doctrine is to be considered as
"false, which is contrary to that truth, which was taught by
"the Church, by the Apostles, by Christ, and by God. You

*Sacred Literature, vol. 4. appen: p. 4—12.

publication may possibly fall into the hands of some persons, who will never have an opportunity of seeing the other, I will be at the pains to transcribe them here, translating such as are in Latin for the use of the mere English reader, and adding a few more testimonies to the same purpose, which have since occurred to me in the course of my reading.

I. BUDDÆUS.

“ therefore who wish to exercise your curiosity in things relating
 “ to your salvation, visit the apostolical churches where the chairs
 “ of the Apostles still are, and where their authentic letters are
 “ read, so that you seem to see and hear them in person. De
 “ Præscrip. cap. 21. 36 Upon the whole, if that be true which
 “ was the most ancient, and that be the most ancient which was
 “ from the beginning, and that was from the beginning, which
 “ was from the Apostles, it will be equally evident, that that was
 “ from the Apostles, which is held sacred in the apostolic churches.
 “ Adv. Marc. l. 4. c. 5.

“ Furnished with these arms, let us defend our own principles,
 “ and answer those who ask a reason of our faith, which we profess to
 “ be that which is truly primitive, catholic, and apostolic. Such
 “ are our principles, that we have no reason to decline the discus-
 “ sion of them before the tribunal of the purest antiquity. Let us
 “ then abandon all useless pursuits, knotty trifles, violent conten-
 “ tions, ridiculous and absurd disputations, and let us pass our own
 “ time, not in places of public business, or diversion, running
 “ about like buffoons, attending the levees of the great, and
 “ courting their favour, but in pulpits, in cathedral chairs, and
 “ in the recesses of our libraries, diligently applying to those stu-
 “ dies, which have for their object the good of the church, the
 “ salvation of souls, the knowledge of antiquity, and all useful
 “ literature.

“ Do you especially apply to these sacred studies with all your
 “ might, who are blessed with ability and leisure, who are high
 “ in rank, and in the possession of those emoluments, which the
 “ piety of our ancestors has consecrated as the rewards of useful
 “ learning, and excitements to greater diligence. Let us distin-
 “ guish ourselves by piety and sacred literature. Let the venera-
 “ ble Fathers of the catholic church be in everlasting remem-
 “ brance with us, and let their writings be held in the highest
 “ honour and esteem. If my writings shall contribute in the least
 “ to our better acquaintance with them, I shall think that I have
 “ not laboured in vain.”

I. BUDDÆUS.

THE Fathers were men, therefore fallible, and not to be acquitted of all mistakes, unless, we could acquit them too of human frailties. But though we should not dissemble the real errors of the Fathers; yet it becomes us to be cautious in our censures, nor to lay more errors to their charge, than they were really guilty of; nor to be over-zealous in searching out every occasion of carping at their writings; nor to aggravate, beyond reason, those errors which they may be found to have fallen into; lest we thereby give an handle to the enemies of religion to turn it to a bad use, by decrying the authority of antiquity in general, and in relation to the weightier matters of our faith. Buddæus confesses this. And though he was no very zealous advocate for the Fathers, he speaks of them in very handsome terms, not running the lengths of those, who talk only as their prejudices direct them, without knowing any thing of the matter. Buddæus was a man of learning, and knew what he said; and therefore at the same time that he cannot acquit the Fathers of all errors and faults (and who ever pretended to do it?) declares them to have been excellent men, judicious, pious, virtuous, and learned for the times they lived in. He takes the
“ middle

middle way, neither ascribing too much, nor too little to their authority. He is so far from despising them, as they only do who are ignorant of them, that he recommends the diligent study of them, not only as useful, but as absolutely necessary in order to an exact knowledge in ecclesiastical antiquity: and declares, that, notwithstanding the errors of this or of that single Father in some points; yet the true catholic doctrine and faith of the church may be found in them^o.

II. JEROM ZANCHIUS.

THIS I ingenuously confess, such is the state of my mind, that I cannot easily depart, either from the determinations of the antient Fathers, or their interpretations of scripture, unless convinced and compelled, either by plain testimonies of sacred scripture, or necessary consequences, and clear demonstrations. For my conscience is so far satisfied, that I desire even to die in this settled conviction of mind.—

I freely profess to the whole church of Christ, that my conscience will not let me dissent from the opinions of the Fathers, especially when most or all of them agree in one thing.”

III. MONSIEUR

^oRev. Joseph Clarke's Preface to Dr. Waterland's Sermons, p. 20.

¹Epistle before his Confession of Faith.

III. MONSIEUR DAILLÉ.

THERE is no question to be made, but that the Christian religion was more pure, and without mixture, in its beginnings and infancy, than it was afterwards in its youth and progress, it being the ordinary course of things, to contract corruptions more or less, according as they are more or less removed from their first institution. Now I cannot believe, that any faithful Christian will deny, but that Christianity was in its height and perfection in the time of the blessed Apostles. And indeed it would be the greatest injury that could be offered them, to say, that any of their successors have either had a greater desire, or more abilities to advance Christianity than they had: It will hence follow then, that those times which were nearest to the Apostles were necessarily the purest, and least subject to suspicion of corruptions, either in doctrine, or in manners, and Christian discipline; it being but reasonable to believe, that if there be any corruptions crept into the church, they came in by little and little, and by degrees; as it happens in all other things.*—

The Fathers abound in strong and solid proofs of the fundamental principles of Christianity, and they teach many excellent things, which contribute to the clear understanding of the scriptures, in which these mysteries are contained. In this re-

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spect,

*Treatise on the Right Use of the Fathers, p. 2. Eng. Transf.

spect, their authority is of great use, and may serve as a probable argument of the truth.^o

IV. GROTIUS.

THE works of the apostolical Fathers were, next to the scriptures, Grotius' favourite study.¹

V. BISHOP BULL.

THE reading of the Fathers, next to the holy scriptures, should be the foundation of all theology.* —

This is the best, yea, the only way of ending our most unhappy controversies, which have rent the church of Christ into so many parts, if, next to the scriptures, we would receive and reverence the most pure and primitive antiquity, and persuade others to the same practice, and religiously follow the agreeing judgment of the ancient doctors approved by the catholic church, and especially of them who were nearest to the apostolic age, wheresoever this can be found, which is to be found in all those points that are of any great moment.³

VI. KING CHARLES I.

IF the practice of the primitive church, and the universal consent of the Fathers be not a convincing argument, when the interpretation of scripture is doubtful,

^oIbid. part 2, p. 184.—This is the testimony of an enemy to the Fathers, extorted by the mere force of truth.

¹M. De Burigny's Life, p. 297.—²Defensio Fidei Nicænæ, p. 7.

³Nelson's Life of Bp. Bull.

doubtful, I know nothing.—Although I never esteemed any argument equal to the scriptures, yet I do think the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and the universal practice of the primitive church, to be the best and most authentic interpreters of God's word.*

VII. REV. DR. GRABE.

THIS learned man, after taking his master of arts degree, devoted himself to the study of divinity, and read the works of the Fathers with the utmost attention. These he took first into his hand as the best masters and instructors upon the important subject of religion. He was fond of their principles and customs, and that fondness grew into a kind of unreserved veneration for their authority.†

VIII. REV. WILLIAM CAVE, D. D.

WE have in the Fathers of the church the most admirable examples of a divine and religious life, of a real and unfeigned piety, a sincere and universal charity, a strict temperance and sobriety, an unconquerable patience and submission clearly represented to us. And the higher we go, the more illustrious are the instances of piety and virtue.‡ For however later ages may have improved in knowledge, experience daily making new additions to arts and sciences, yet

P 2

former

*Hickes' Sermons, p. 82.—†New and General Biographical Dictionary.

former times were most eminent for the practice and virtues of a holy life. The divine laws while newly published had a stronger influence upon the minds of men, and the spirit of religion was more active and vigorous, till men by degrees began to be debauched into that impiety and profaneness, that in these last times have over-run the world.⁶

IX. REV. CHARLES LESLIE.

NOTHING can contribute more towards promoting the service of Christ in this degenerate age, than to acquaint men with the histories of the church, and the works of the Fathers in the primitive times.⁷

X. REV. DR. GEORGE HICKES.

ALL students in divinity should be convinced, how necessary it is to read the ancient Fathers, in order downwards from the apostolical age.⁸

XI. REV. DR. WATERLAND.

THE works of the Fathers will be held in great esteem and veneration, while every weak attempt to blast their credit, will meet with what it justly deserves; I was going to say what, but it may sound severe.⁹

XII. REV.

⁶Apostolici, in the address to the Reader.—⁷Letter to Mr. Parker.—⁸Letter to Mr. Nelson.

⁹Defence of some Queries, p. 421. See an able defence of the Fathers against the cavils of their adversaries in Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 412—436.

**XII. REV. WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH,
M. A.**

THE question whether such or such a book be canonical scripture, though it may be decided negatively out of scripture, by shewing apparent and irreconcilable contradictions between it and some other book confessedly canonical: but affirmatively it cannot, but only by the testimonies of the ancient churches; any book being to be received as undoubtedly canonical, or to be doubted of as uncertain, or rejected as apocryphal, according as it was received, or doubted of, or rejected by them.*

Again:—Thus much I can say, that whatsoever hath been held necessary to salvation, either by the catholic church of all ages, or by the consent of Fathers, measured by Vincentius Lyrinensis' rule—I do verily believe and embrace.*

XIII. ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON.

I am sure the ancient Fathers and Christians defined Christian religion better, and gave a more reasonable and satisfactory account of it, than any of those do, who are so apt to slight them.*

P 3

XIV. ARCHBISHOP

See also the use of an appeal to the writings of the Fathers in the Trinitarian controversy, in the above Defence of some Queries,

p. 453—455.

*Works.—¹Ibid. pref. p. 13.—²Sermon 228, p. 264.

XIV. ARCHBISHOP WAKE.

WE ought to look upon the writings of the apostolical Fathers, though not of equal authority with those which we call in a singular manner the holy scriptures, yet worthy of a much greater respect than any composures that have been made since; however men may seem to have afterwards written with more art, and to have shewn a much greater stock of human learning, than what is to be found, not only in their writings, but even in the sacred books of the New Testament itself.*

XV. REV. WILLIAM REEVES, M. A.

NOTWITHSTANDING the ingrate and dishonest practices of some late unchristian critics, the the Fathers must be allowed not to have been behind hand in the common advantages of men; for their writings speak them to be as great by nature and education, of as much point and solidity, penetration and brightness, and every human way as well adjusted for defenders of the faith, as any reasoners of the hugest size in these declining ages of the world.—

Whoever sets out in the study of the Christian mystery without the conduct of the Fathers, seems to me to be sailing into the ocean without his compass, in danger of being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.†

hind

*Introduction to the Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers.

†Preface to Primitive Apologies.

**XVI. REV. NATHANIEL MARSHAL;
L. L. B.**

WHEN the sense of scripture is disputed, upon any article of moment, it cannot but be of consequence to know what the churches thought of it, which had the presence and conversation of the Apostles to set them right in any mistaken construction of their doctrine, whether delivered to them by word or writing. Their unanimity in such articles, during the three first ages, and their care to prevent innovations, or to bear testimony against them, when they could not be prevented, are considerable arguments in favour of the truths, which were so preserved by them. And the writers, who lived within that period, are very full and competent witnesses to us of their sentiments; and their integrity in reporting them, is instead of a thousand other excellencies.*

XVII. REV. DR. BISHOP.

IT is certain that the judgment and determination of the first ages concerning any article of faith, or the meaning of scripture, will be of great weight with all serious and unprejudiced persons. Though the scriptures are the only rule of faith, yet may they be mistaken, or perverted; and therefore in dubious and disputed points, we are apt to enquire how the earliest authors understood and explained them;

P 4

*Preface to Cyprian's Works.

them: what opinions they held and professed as the true and necessary doctrines of Christianity, and what they denied or condemned, as erroneous, dangerous, and heretical. Though we are not to pay such a deference to them, as to believe any thing upon their authority, without, or against scripture; yet, in stating the sense of scripture, it must be a great satisfaction to our own minds, and a strong confirmation of our judgment, when we perceive that they concur with us in their notions, and interpret the holy scriptures after the same manner, and draw the same inferences from them; and it will highly recommend our doctrine to the world, when we can produce the sanction of antiquity in behalf of it. On the other hand, as it must lead a man, who has any measure of modesty and humility, to suspect his own understanding, and to guard against an assuming and peremptory behaviour; when he contradicts the common and long received opinions, and opposes his peculiar tenets to the declaration of the Ancients upon the same subject; so he must be apprehensive, that it will infallibly expose him to the public disesteem and censure.⁷

XVIII. BISHOP BEVERIDGE.

ALMIGHTY God looking continually down upon his church militant here below hath preserv-
ed

⁷Sermons at Lady Moyer's Lecture, p. 132.

ed to us even the most ancient commentaries safe and perfect; so that we never can sufficiently admire his wonderful providence in this affair: first, indeed, that so many books should be written by Christians in times so unfriendly and turbulent; and then, after such a variety of complex revolutions, that they should come down to our own times. For, not to go far from the Apostles, how many, and what extraordinary volumes are even now extant, which were written in the three first ages after them? Eusebius of Cæsarea, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, Optatus of Milevum, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen and Nyssen, Epiphanius, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, Theophilus of Alexandria, Rufinus, Gaudentius, Aurelius Prudentius, Augustine of Hippo, Marius Mercator, Chrysostom, Severus Sulpitius: We have likewise the truly excellent works of Lactantius, Arnobius, Dionysius Alexandrinus, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and St. Cyprian, who flourished in the second age after the Apostles, and of consequence before the Nicene council. We have volumes sufficiently large from Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, written in the same century. Minutius Felix was also of the same period. We have moreover the ecclesiastical monuments of Irenæus, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Athenagoras, and Justin Martyr,
drawn

drawn up in the age next after the Apostles, besides the fragments of many others inserted in the church history of Eusebius. We have, finally, the truly venerable little works of St. Polycarp, Ignatius, and Clemens Romanus (and possibly of Hermas also) who all were conversant with the very Apostles of our Lord. So that we have a certain admirable continuation and series of ecclesiastical affairs from the very apostolic age to the fourth century, and so downwards even to our own times, drawn up by men the most learned in each age; from whence we at this day may draw the perpetual and unanimous consent of the universal church, as well in doctrine as in discipline.*

XIX. WILLIAM WHISTON.

My advice for the study of Divinity is, that, instead of all*those bare, and later, and partial composures, whether they be councils, or Fathers, or schoolmen, or systems, or controversies; we make it our whole business, with the greatest care, integrity, and impartiality, to study the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, with the best books necessary for the thorough understanding of the same: And, as a supplement and security to the right understanding of them, with the next degree of care, and with equal impartiality, to study the apostolical Fathers, and then those of the second century at the least.

Nay,

*Codex Canonum.

Nay, if possible, those of the third, and beginning of the fourth century also, till the time of Constantine the Great, and the council of Nice; concluding, as it were, this scheme of primitive writers with the works of the great Eusebius, to whom we owe almost all our authentic knowledge of the history of this first and purest state of the Christian church.

That this is the safest and surest, and most satisfactory method of study in divinity, all considering men must needs grant; because it is taking nothing upon trust, or at the second hand, but going immediately to the fountain head, to the truly genuine and original books of our religion.

As to myself, I must needs confess, that so little as the bare perusal of the Epistles and Martyrdom of St. Ignatius, and of the Epistle and Martyrdom of St. Polycarp; who must both of them know whether the facts on which our religion depends were really true or not; do more effectually convince me of the certain truth of Christianity, than whole books of the moderns on that subject, though written with great force and advantage.

As to the writings of the apostolical Fathers, I find such an honest simplicity, zeal, and seriousness in their exhortations, reproofs, directions, and examples, for the promoting of true and
genuine

genuine piety, that none of the modern books of religion and devotion themselves—do by any means so deeply affect and persuade me.*

XX. THE REV. ANTONY BLACKWALL,
M. A.

I would fain beg room among the Classics for three primitive writers of the church, St. Chrysostom, Minutius Felix, and Lactantius. St. Chrysostom is easy and pleasant to new beginners; and has written with a purity and eloquence which have been the admiration of all ages. This wonderful man in a great measure possesses all the excellencies of the most valuable Greek and Roman classics. He has the invention, copiousness, and perspicuity of Cicero; and all the elegance and accuracy of composition which is admired in Isocrates; with much greater variety and freedom. According as his subject requires, he has the easiness and sweetness of Xenophon, and the pathetic force and rapid simplicity of Demosthenes. His judgment is exquisite, his images noble, his morality sensible and beautiful. No man understands human nature to greater perfection, nor has a happier power of persuasion. He is always clear and intelligible upon the loftiest and greatest subject; and sublime and noble upon the least.

The

*Advice for the Study of Divinity, passim.

The Dialogue of Minutius is judicious and elegant, close and perspicuous. The Critics have indeed charged him with want of the Roman purity in some places; but if he has in a few passages a little spice of the African dialect, it is the least imaginable. He is full of lively and instructive sentences, which almost equal the number of the periods; which sentences naturally result from his subject, and are neatly interwoven with the thread and contexture of his discourse. He argues with convincing reason, and rallies with agreeable satire and sharpness. His wit is true sterling, solid and bright, of intrinsic value, and unallayed lustre. He clears Christianity from the vile aspersions which the Pagan disputant threw upon it, and retorts his charge upon his adversary's religion with such becoming vehemence, and evidence of truth, that he demonstrates himself to be the most dangerous opponent that could be feared against a bad cause, as well as the noblest advocate, and ablest champion, that could be desired for a good one.

Lactantius has so much of the strength and beauty of the great Roman philosopher and orator; that he has gained the honourable character of the Christian Cicero. No man wrote with equal purity after the decay of the Latin tongue; scarce any man so like Cicero in its state of perfection. Both the Christian Apologists understand all the rites and ceremonies of the Grecian and Roman religion;

religion; and are perfectly acquainted with all their authors. They happily employ the arguments of the Pagan philosophers, the accounts of their historians, and the eloquence of their poets and orators, to defend and adorn the Christian cause. They turn the artillery of their Heathen enemies against them; prove their pretended gods to be mere mortals, by the concessions of their most zealous worshippers; and triumph over Roman superstition by the force of Roman eloquence.

XXI. DR. J O R T I N.

IT would be a false inference to conclude from the blemishes and mistakes of the Fathers, that they are to be cast aside as altogether useless.

Considered as classic authors, they are as valuable as their Pagan contemporaries, and contain instruction of the grammatical, critical, and philosophical kind.

They are unexceptionable witnesses from age to age of the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament; they shew us evidently that they had the same scriptures which we now have.

They serve to settle the true readings of the New Testament, and are of the more importance, as we have hardly any manuscripts older than the fifth century, and but few of those.

The Fathers, particularly the Greek Fathers, are in some places useful interpreters of the scriptures.

If

If we take them in the character of historians, though they are not professedly such, they are witnesses and recorders of the customs and opinions of Christians, Jews, and Pagans, and represent to us the state of the church and empire.*

XXII. REV. DR. CROFT.

EXCEPT a critical acquaintance with the original language of the Old Testament, and even this exception is not applicable to all, the ancient Fathers had most of the learning of which the world was in possession.*

XXIII. BISHOP HORSLEY.

THE reasonableness of our faith will be best understood from the writings of the Fathers of the three first centuries. And amongst these the Platonists of the second age deserve particular attention, for the great perspicuity with which in general they expound the faith, and the great ability with which they defend it.*

XXIV. THE REV. HENRY KETT, M. A.

IN the works of the Fathers may be found specimens of elegant composition to gratify the taste; interesting facts to enlarge the circle of knowledge; and examples of piety to amend the heart.

The reader of the Fathers is convinced that although the prize of literature is borne away by the
classical

*Charge Second, p. 397.—³Sermons, p. 69.—⁴Tracts, p. 68.

classical authors of Greece and Rome; yet similar beauties distinguish the compositions which are the objects of his pursuit. Neither the graces of simplicity, nor the splendour of ornament were confined to Xenophon and Plato, nor to Livy and Cicero; for every impartial critic will commend the pure stile of Lactantius; the rich imagery, and apposite illustrations of Theodoret; the classical fluency of Minutius Felix; the uniform perspicuity of Basil; the glowing effusions of Gregory of Nazianzum; and the exuberant and attracting eloquence of Chrysostom, and Cyprian.

From the Fathers we may learn with what unremitting care the holy scriptures were preserved during successive ages. The quotations which abound in their works furnish strong and convincing proofs of the authenticity of the present copies. By them we are informed that these scriptures were zealously appealed to and consulted by writers who were unanimous upon no other subject. Their authenticity was held to be indisputable. They were repeatedly made the arbiters of controversy, and the guides of faith and practice. Hence also we estimate the veneration in which they were held and the vigilance with which they were guarded. Hence we derive the most perfect assurance and strongest evidence that they have escaped unmulitated, and uncorrupted from the tumult of controversy, the artifice of fraud, the hostility of Paganism, and the ravages of time.

From

From the great store of literature which the church has accumulated from age to age, there are certain productions which deserve to be selected with peculiar care. The works of those whose names have been recited, are valuable for elegance of style, faithfulness of narrative, fervour of piety, or copiousness of examples. But allowing the strength of these recommendations, we hesitate not to conclude, that the first attention of an ecclesiastical student is most properly directed to Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Athenagoras.

If it be considered that their writings immediately succeeded the publication of the New Testament; that they are repositories of sacred history which in the order of time claim the nearest place to the gospel; that they are the monuments of the sincerity of the early converts, and the evidences of the authenticity of the New Testament, they become very interesting subjects of speculation. We shall raise these works to a much greater height of esteem if we consider the situations and the attainments of their respective authors. The ages in which they flourished were singularly propitious to the acquirement of evangelical knowledge, as they drew Christianity from its source. Some of them were exalted to the highest rank in the church, and others were distinguished by comprehensive learning. Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp and Irenæus were Bishops of the most popu-
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pulous

pulous and celebrated cities of the Roman empire, and Justin and Athenagoras were instructed in the wisdom of the ancient Philosophers. The lives of all were consecrated to the faith; and such was their unconquerable adherence to the Christian cause, that Ignatius, Polycarp and Justin sealed its truth with their blood.

The field of information which their works open to our view is wide and interesting. Here are to be found the prevailing sentiments of the first Christians, the testimony borne to the inspired volume, and the interpretation first made of its contents. Here are described the first heresies, and what measures were adopted to confute them; the discipline established in the infant church, the form of its government, and the various and cruel machinations of its enemies. Moreover, in them may be seen the earnestness of the primitive believers for the glory of God, and their solicitude for the salvation of man; what was their support during the vicissitudes of life; and what the ground of their hopes, amidst the sufferings of martyrdom. —

IF THE writings of the Fathers⁵ are so excellent and important, let the well-disposed Christian who

wishes

⁵ Sermons at the Bampton Lecture, *passim*.

⁶ Various other testimonies in favour of the Fathers, and the utility they are of in determining the true sense of scripture, may be met with in the notes of Dr. Waterland's unanswerable book on the Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. G. Vossius, Casaubon, Calvin, Melancthon, Patrick, Dodwell, Sherlock, and others, are there mentioned as being of the same opinion with the above learned men.

wishes to understand the grounds of his profession; and go to the bottom of things, lay aside the perusal of modern publications, upon divine subjects, as much as may be, and go back to first principles. The present mode of studying religion is directly the reverse of what it ought to be. — The great bulk of common Christians spend all their time in a desultory kind of reading any thing or every thing that comes to hand, right or wrong, without any settled plan whatever. Now they will peruse a chapter in the bible, now a sermon written by some favourite author. At one time they will take up a controversial pamphlet, at another they will spend an hour in a book of entertainment. This is the general mode of proceeding, and the sure way to keep us always children. So doing, we shall be *tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; always learning, and never being able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* They never seem to reflect, that there is any danger of being deceived and misled. They quite forget, that *the devil is going about as a rearing lion seeking whom*

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he

The celebrated Selden also says, when speaking of the bible, “the text serves only to guess by, we must satisfy ourselves fully out of the authors that lived about those times.”

Table Talk, p. 8.

See Monthly Review for June 1783, p. 515, for their testimony in favour of the Fathers, and also for the opinion of the learned Schultens. See moreover the Sequel of William Burgh, Esq; p. 10, 11, for his sentiments on the same great men. Bishop Hurd has likewise given a very favourable account of them in his Sermons at Lincoln's Inn, vol. 1. p. 10.

be may devour. They seldom consider, that we are all accountable to God for the cultivation of our mental powers, and for the conduct of our understandings, as well as for the morality of our exterior conduct; and that there are damnable principles, as well as destructive practices.⁷ Hence that indifference to religious opinions beyond the example of former ages.⁸ Hence that frivolosity of conduct, which

⁷The enemies of our civil and religious constitution have for many years been working in secret for the subversion of it by every art they can devise. One of the most effectual has been the command which they have got of the greater part of our periodical publications. When they have made a sufficient number of friends to abet their cause, there is no manner of doubt but they will endeavour to compel by force of arms what now they are aiming to accomplish by sophistry, misrepresentation, and false philosophy. The King's late well-timed proclamation has disconcerted their measures for the present, and given those restless and discontented spirits to see, that their party is not so powerful as they overweeningly conceived it to have been. The friends of this happy country, however, ought by no means to rest here. Our adversaries are straining every nerve to accomplish their designs. We ought to do the same for the support of what they are wishing to demolish. I am happy to inform the Reader of these *Strictures*, that a very respectable Society is formed in London for the express purpose of opposing, in every way they think most expedient, the enemies of our faith, our religion, and our laws.—For further particulars of this Society, see “A Proposal for a Reformation of Principles,” with a “Sequel to the Proposal,” at the end of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1792.

⁸There has been a very excellent little book published lately by an anonymous author, who calls himself, “One of the Lairy,” which I could wish to be carefully read by every genteel person in the kingdom. It is entitled, “An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World;” and is well calculated to be of considerable use to that description of persons, if they could be prevailed upon to give it a serious perusal. There are many observations in it which are peculiarly worthy the attention of Dr. Priestley, and all our enlightened and liberal-minded philosophers. I will take the liberty of extracting one passage from the close of the first chapter, where he speaks of that laxity of religious opinions which so

which pervades all ranks of men, even where the interests of eternity are concerned. And hence too that general languour and lukewarmness so visible in many of our places of religious worship.

Q 3

Now

highly distinguishes the character of the present age:—"The strong and generous bias," says this elegant and sensible writer, "in favour of universal toleration, noble as the principle itself is, has engendered a dangerous notion that all error is innocent. Whether it be owing to this, or to whatever other cause, it is certain that the discriminating features of the Christian religion are every day growing into less repute; and it is become the fashion, even among the better sort, to evade, to lower, or to generalize, its most distinguishing peculiarities.

"Having wisely and happily freed ourselves from the trammels of human authority, are we not turning our liberty into licentiousness, and wantonly struggling to throw off the *divine* authority too? Freedom of thought is the glory of the human mind, while it is confined within its just and sober limits; but though we are accountable for *opinions* at no earthly tribunal, yet it should be remembered that thoughts as well as actions are amenable to the bar of God: and though we may rejoice that the tyranny of the spiritual Procrustes is so far annihilated, that it is no longer thought a proof of the orthodoxy of one man's opinions, that he lop or lengthen those of another till they fit his own measure; yet there is still a standard by which not only actions are weighed, but opinions are judged; and every sentiment which is clearly inconsistent with the revealed will of God, is as much throwing off *his* dominion, as the breach of any of his moral precepts.

"There is then surely one test by which it is no mark of intolerance to try the principles of men, namely, the *Law and the Testimony*: and it is impossible not to lament, that, while a more generous spirit governs our judgment, a purer principle does not seem to regulate our lives. May it not be said, that, while we are justly commended for thinking charitably of the opinions of others, we seem, in return, as if we were desirous of furnishing them with an opportunity of exercising their candour, by the laxity of principle in which we indulge ourselves? If the hearts of men were as firmly united to each other by the bond of charity, as some pretend, they could not fail of being united to God also, by one common principle of piety, the only certain source of all charitable judgment, as well as of all virtuous conduct.

Now, if any person should wish to be directed into a more excellent way, and not to be the sport of deists,⁹ sceptics, and Socinians,^{*} let him look back, as we have before observed, to first principles.

"Instead of abiding by the salutary precept of *judging no man*, it is the fashion to exceed our commission, and to fancy every body to be in a safe state. But, in forming our notions, we have to choose between the Bible and the world, between the rule and the practice. Where they do not agree, it is left to the judgment, of believers at least, by which we are to decide. But we never act, in religious concerns, by the same rule of common sense and equitable judgment which governs us on other occasions. In weighing any commodity, its weight is determined by some generally-allowed standard; and if the commodity be heavier or lighter than the standard weight, we add to or take from it: but we never break, or clip, or reduce the weight to suit the thing we are weighing; because the common consent of mankind has agreed that the one shall be considered as the standard to ascertain the value of the other. But, in weighing our principles by the standard of the Gospel, we do just the reverse. Instead of bringing our opinions and actions to the *balance of the sanctuary*, to determine and rectify their comparative deficiencies, we lower and reduce the standard of the scripture doctrines till we have accommodated them to our own purposes; so that, instead of trying others and ourselves by God's unerring rule, we try the truth of God's rule by its conformity or non-conformity to our own depraved notions and corrupt practices."

⁹That declaration of Lord Bacon's concerning the gospel of Christ, which I have somewhere met with, ought to confound every Deist, and shut his mouth for ever:—"There never was found," says he, "in any age of the world, either philosophy, or sect, or religion, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian faith."

^{*}Dr. Priestley, I think, is usually considered as the first Socinian of the age. I have observed on the 153d. page of these Strictures, that his learning is said to be various, but superficial. I have, since writing that observation, been somewhat confirmed in the supposition, by reading his "Miscellaneous Observations relating to Education." The advice he there gives, and especially in the third Section, where he treats of the Latin and Greek languages, is calculated to make no other than superficial scholars. After reading this we are no longer surprized at the various inaccuracies to be found in some of his polemical compositions, and that he has

principles. He will find his account in beginning with the holy scriptures, and reading them carefully and repeatedly over in chronological order. The margin and index of our larger bibles will enable him to do this with sufficient accuracy. Read them in the original languages, if you can: if not, in our own excellent translation.² Read them with fervent and

Q 4

persevering

given Dr. Horsley such repeated advantages over him. One may appeal to any good scholar for the justice of these observations. Dr. Priestley's advice respecting the two learned tongues is in direct opposition to the practice of all the best grammatical schools in England. No man can be an *able* scholar without a *thorough* acquaintance with Latin and Greek. I know something of both these languages myself; Dr. Priestley, no doubt, does the same: but I am far from thinking my acquaintance with them is such as to entitle me to the very honourable distinction of a *good classic*. And though I have no difficulty in granting, that Dr. Priestley is in every respect far superior to myself, yet there is reason to conclude, that neither is he entitled to that distinction. Mr. Whitaker, indeed, at the 85th page, of his very learned work before mentioned, supposes Dr. Priestley so ignorant of the Latin tongue as not to be able to read Bishop Bull's Defence of the Nicene Faith in its original language, and wishes that some learned hand would be at the pains of translating it for the Doctor's information.— This is an uncandid reflection! It is a pity the warmth of controversy and zeal for truth should betray a worthy man into such a censure. If I have been guilty of any such in the course of these Strictures, I hereby recant them with all my spirit. Besides, if Dr. Priestley were incapable of reading the Latin original, Bishop Horsley and Mr. Whitaker may be informed, as they seem not to know the circumstance, that all Bishop Bull's works on the Holy Trinity, published by Dr. Grabe, have long since been translated and published in two octavo volumes, by Francis Holland, M. A. Rector of Sutton, Wilts. The translation I met with accidentally some years ago in a bookseller's shop at Bath. It was printed in 1730, and contains all Grabe's Notes, and some Reflections upon the Controversists in this doctrine by the Translator.

"The English translation of the bible is the best translation in the world, and renders the sense of the original best, taking in for the English translation, the Bishop's bible as well as King James's." Selden's Table Talk, p. 6.

persevering prayer to the Almighty, for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to guide your mind into the knowledge and experience of all saving truth. Read them frequently upon your knees; and, as much as possible, divest yourself of all prejudice of mind, and every preconceived opinion. I would recommend them, moreover, to be read without notes and illustrations of any kind; or at least, let them be very concise, and free from party rage. Comments and illustrations usually do more harm than good, by drawing our attention too much from the text itself. The marginal notes and references, together with the general chronological index at the end of our quarto bibles, are infinitely preferable to all the illustrations that ever were written, if we are desirous of knowing rather what is the mind of God in this word, than the religious nostrums of party-spirited commentators.

When we have got all the light and information that the holy scriptures afford, we need not give ourselves any concern about the various and contradictory opinions of men: but if any doubt should remain upon our minds, on subjects which seem important to the scheme of divine truth, let us not regard the ipse-dixits of any of our noisy pretenders to

This declaration was made by this most learned man near 150 years ago. Several very substantial reasons may now be urged why a *revisal* of our vulgar translation should take place; but I should be sorry to see a *new* one by public authority. A judicious *revisal*, however, appears to me highly expedient, in the present improved state of literature. And I will add, Is not a *revisal* of our public forms of prayer, &c. equally expedient?

to superior light and knowledge,* but betake ourselves to the immediate followers of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles. They will clear up all our doubts, *at least with respect to matters of fact,*
and

*Many of these new-light people speak of the present state of learning and philosophy, as though the ages that are past knew nothing in comparison of the wonderful discoveries they are daily making, and nature were about to throw open all her secrets before them. If, however, they would but acquaint themselves thoroughly with the various works and inventions of our forefathers, they would find but little reason for exultation. Experimental philosophy has indeed been making considerable advances since the time of Friar Bacon. The discovery of the art of printing has had the happiest effects. But the stream can never rise higher than the fountain. Man is a limited creature. He may boast himself as he pleases; but his present powers are not equal to great things. And, at all events, whatever discoveries he may make in physics: in politics we may say, *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.* Every kind of government has been tried; and every kind has its advantages and disadvantages. Perfection belongs not to human institutions.

“For forms of government let fools contest;

“What e’er is best administer’d is best.”

And as to religion, that is fixed and limited. When God revealed his will to the Israelites by Moses, that revelation was the standard. No improvement was to be made, or could be made, till the dispensation itself should be changed by the same authority that enjoined it. The perfection of men under that institution was an exact compliance with all its injunctions. It is much the same under the Christian œconomy. The New Testament is the rule and standard. No addition, no amendment, no alteration, no improvement, can be admitted here. All is pure, all is perfect, nothing too little, nothing too much. Give us but a true and uncorrupted copy, and it admits of no clipping and curtailings by any of our self-conceited bible-menders whatever. Dr. Priestley’s experimental dexterity will not apply to the book of revelation in like manner as to the volume of creation. The sentiments of the truly learned and excellent Bishop Hurd, whom the Doctor presumes to treat with pity and indignation, because, forsooth! he believes in the divinity and atonement of his Saviour; are applicable to the point in hand. This great Man’s writings, however, are as much superior to the theological compositions of the learned Doctor as silver is superior to tinsel. There is a modesty in the

and we may safely abide by their determination. What all these great and good men, for the first three or four centuries, clearly agreed to establish, bids fair to be the truth, and here we may securely set our foot.

I know

one, which is a sure indication of a great mind; and a haughty kind of confidence in the other, which betrays a want of self-knowledge. The one reasons justly, the other sophistically: the one pleads the cause of God; defends the personal honour of his Son; vindicates the authenticity of his word; and wipes off the aspersions cast upon the generation of God's children: the other obscures the glory of the Divine Being; degrades his only begotten Son to the rank of a mere, frail, weak, peccable, and mistaken man; rejects some parts of holy scripture entirely, and represents what he does retain as being full of blunders and misrepresentations; and exalts the ancient heretics to the rank of the only true servants of the living God, while all the orthodox Fathers of the church, men famous in their generation, and renowned in all ages for their learning, faith, and piety, are considered in the light of idolaters.—But—let us hear the sentiments of this truly learned Prelate:—"Even in the pursuits of *human science*," says he, "where reason can do most, all the efforts of the ablest understanding penetrate but a little way. We know enough of *the nature of things*, to serve the purposes of common life; and enough of *the nature of man*, to discover our duty towards each other. And within this narrow circle all our knowledge, be we as proud of it as we please, is confined. Clouds and darkness cover the rest; and thus the ablest men of all times have seen and confessed. If there be a man, whom Heaven has formed with greater powers and stronger faculties than are commonly met with in the species, he is the *first* to discover, and to lament, his own blindness and weakness: a Socrates and a Pascal have been considered as prodigies of parts and ingenuity; yet, while the meanest Sophist is puffed up with the conceit of his own knowledge, these divine men confess nothing so readily as their own ignorance.

"And, if this be the case of human learning, what must we think of *divine*? where Reason teaches nothing, beyond the existence and attributes of God, and, as to every thing else, without the aid of *Revelation*, is stark-blind. *The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God*—is an assertion, to which common sense and common experience must assent. Yet shall

I know it will be objected—What are we to go to the Fathers, and read all their voluminous writings, before we fix our religious principles? Then what will become of the great majority of mankind, who have it not in their power so to do?

This objection seems plausible; but, to use the words of a learned man, “every person must judge
“for himself in proportion to those abilities which
“God has given him. If he have opportunity
“and learning for that purpose, he will do well to
“search into the records of antiquity; but otherwise he must content himself with the reports of
“learned men, of those especially to whose charge
“he is committed, and of whose integrity he can
“have no reasonable doubt. I know no other
“way by which he may be able to prove, that the
“New Testament itself, upon which he founds his
“belief, is really the word of God. He must
“trust to the tradition of the church, and particularly to the fidelity of the first successors of
“the Apostles, that such books were really written
“by those holy persons, under whose names they
“are transmitted to us. And since there were many
“other histories, as St. Luke bears witness, of
“our

“every idle speculatist, who has but the confidence to call himself
“a Philosopher, treat the *divine word*, as freely as any ordinary
“subject; and pronounce as peremptorily of the *revealed will of*
“*God*, which the angels themselves adore in silence, as if he
“knew for certain, that his poor and scanty understanding was
“commensurate with the councils of the Most High!”

Sermons at Lincoln's-Inn, vol. 1, p. 226, 227.

“ our Saviour’s life and actions, he must trust them
 “ again in distinguishing between them, and judg-
 “ ing which were written by inspiration of God, and
 “ which were merely human compositions. After
 “ this he must trust them with the safe custody of
 “ these books, and taking care that copies might be
 “ faithfully transcribed from them. Then he must
 “ trust the copyists of succeeding ages with trans-
 “ cribing from such as were before them. And
 “ when the art of printing was found out, he must
 “ trust the several editors with collating the copies
 “ which occurred to them, and noting their re-
 “ spective variations. So far the learned and un-
 “ learned must trust to them alike: but the latter
 “ besides all this must rely upon the credit of trans-
 “ lators, for faithfully conveying to them the sense
 “ of the original. So that, to shut out human evi-
 “ dence from the proofs of our faith, so far as it is
 “ capable of being proved by facts, is really to sap
 “ the foundation upon which it stands, and to set
 “ men loose to eternal scepticism and uncertainty.
 “ It is in effect to say, we should believe no farther
 “ than our senses reach; and then there is an end of
 “ all the credibility of history for the ages that
 “ are past, or even for the present, excepting in
 “ those few occurrences of which we may happen
 “ to be witnesses ourselves.”*

Whether this method of investigating religious
 truth meets with the approbation of the Reader or
 not,

*Berriman on the Trinity, p. 11.

not, it is the mode I have for a number of years pursued in the settlement of my own religious opinions, and that in which I have found much satisfaction to my own mind.* And from experience I would earnestly recommend it to every Christian who wishes to save his soul alive, and to be thoroughly grounded and settled in the faith and hope of the gospel.

Should any person be excited by these hints to begin a course of reading in this way, and yet be in want of further direction, the following short scheme is submitted to his consideration, till he is acquainted with a better. And as these Strictures are written, not so much for scholars, as for those who are strangers to the learned languages, the Reader must be directed to such books, and translations of books, as we are already in possession of, rather than such as might be desired. And,

1. The Bible—our common translation, with the marginal references, and general index.⁶ This must

*I have endeavoured to investigate in this manner several of the most important doctrines of Christianity in chronological order. The doctrine of predestination, the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, with that of the Trinity, have all been brought to the test of scripture and antiquity. If life, health and leisure are continued to finish my papers, I may probably some time or other submit them to the perusal of my friends.

⁶The most useful Bible that ever was printed for a mere English reader is that published by the Rev. Clement Cruttwell, with Bishop Wilson's short Notes. Its peculiar excellence is the various translations in one view at the bottom of the text.

must be repeatedly read," with serious prayer to the Almighty for divine aid and illumination, according to the order of time in which each book was written.

—See by all means Prov. 2. 1—9, and Luke 11. 5—13.—“ Believe simply, with the meekness of
“ a child, just as you are told by God, without
“ murmuring or disputing. Depend as absolutely,
“ day by day, on the teaching of Christ, through his
“ word and Spirit, for the knowledge of all things
“ needful to salvation, as any pupil, at an academy,
“ depends on the instructions of an able and cele-
“ brated master.”

2. The two Epistles of St. Clement to the Corinthians.

3. The seven shorter Epistles of Ignatius.

4. The Epistle of Polycarp.

5. The Martyrdoms of Ignatius and Polycarp.

6. The Epistle of St. Barnabas.

7. The Shepherd of Hermas.

These are all to be had in one small octavo volume, well translated by Archbishop Wake.

8. The Apology of Tertullian.

9. The first Apology of Justin Martyr.

10. The Octavius of Minutius Felix.

11. The Commonitory of Vicentius Lirinensis.

These

“If ever Lord Bacon’s observation held good of any book, it holds good of the Bible.—“ Some books,” says this wonderful man, “ are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ; that is,” continues he, “ some books are to be read only in part ; others to be read, but not curiously ; and some few to be read, wholly, and with diligence and attention.”

Essay 50.

These four are all very valuable, and to be bought for a trifle in two volumes octavo, translated by the Rev. William Reeves, M. A.

12. Athenagoras's Apology and Discourse on the Resurrection.

These may be had in one thin octavo volume, translated by the Rev. David Humphreys, B. A.

13. The Works of St. Cyprian.

These may be met with in catalogues for a small sum in one thin folio volume, translated by the Rev. Nathaniel Marshall, M. A.

14. The Dialogue of Justin Martyr with Trypho the Jew.

This is in two octavo volumes, translated by the Rev. Mr. Brown.

15. St. Chrysostom on the Priesthood.

This is well translated by the Rev. John Bunce, M. A.

Several other works of the early Christian writers might be perused with advantage, had we good translations of them; but this is not the case, I think, with many more than these I have already mentioned. Irenæus, in particular, would be very useful in ascertaining the original doctrines of Christianity to the English reader, if a translation of his five books against the ancient heresies were laid before the public. Origen's eight books against Celsus, the Epicurean philosopher, were written towards the latter end of that great man's life, and would

be of much use to the curious enquirer into the original doctrines of Christianity, if we were favoured with a good translation of them.*

All these are works of real reputation, may be procured for a little money, and read at a moderate expense of time. The whole of those in English, bible included, may be purchased at the small sum of four or five pounds, and carefully read over at leisure hours, the important passages extracted into an interleaved bible, or common-place book, in the course of four or five years, more or less according

*There are a few other authors, besides these just mentioned, which should be carefully read by the inquisitive Christian, who is desirous of light and information concerning the original doctrines of Christianity.

1. The Ecclesiastical Histories of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodorit, and Evagrius Scholasticus.—These may be had in English.

2. Cave's *Historia Literaria*.—This is in Latin, and, I believe, was never rendered into our own language.

3. Cave's *Lives of the Primitive Fathers*.

4. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*.—These two are written in English.

5. Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*.—This is written in English.

6. Dupin's *New History of Ecclesiastical Writers*.—This is a very valuable work; and may be had in English.

7. The whole Works of Bishop Bull.—Part of these are in Latin and part in English.

8. Nelson's *Fasts and Festivals*.

9. The Works of Philo, the learned Jew.—These are in Greek.

10. The Works of Josephus, the Jewish warrior.—These were written in Greek, but have been repeatedly translated into English.

11. The Preparation for the Gospel: And,

12. The Demonstration of the Gospel.—These two were written in Greek, by the learned Eusebius, and, I think, have never been translated into the English tongue. They contain, however, much curious and useful information, of which scholars should not be ignorant.

ing to our diligence and zeal. Few Christians, whose minds are sufficiently refined and improved to be capable of the undertaking, would grudge so trifling a sum, in the course of human life, for the sake of obtaining a benefit so inestimable, as satisfaction to the mind, on the most important of all subjects in the world, religion.

But the misfortune is, that the great body of the people, in this and every other country, take their religion upon trust. If they happen to be born Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, or Christians, such they remain, without knowing why or wherefore, only their parents and friends are the same. So among Christians, if they are born Catholics or Protestants, such they will continue, determining not to be wiser than their forefathers. In like manner, if they are sprung from Protestant parents, they take the sect their parents took; believe, or pretend to believe, the principles they are supposed to entertain, without giving themselves any trouble concerning either the truth or the falsehood of them: inasmuch that, if they are in possession of the true principles of the gospel, it is rather by good luck, than owing to any superior merit and sagacity of their own. Such a profession of religion, common sense tells us, can never be considered as a sacrifice acceptable to the Divine Being.

These same persons, however, will not act in this careless and incautious manner, if they have

got a purchase to make. They will examine nicely the quantity as well as the quality of the commodity they wish to possess; and if they conceive their own judgment defective in any respect, they will call in the assistance of their friends; and, should it be real estate they are in quest of, they will not be satisfied till the title is investigated by counsel learned in the law. How different is our conduct in things spiritual, and of importance infinitely greater! For the soul of man being immortal in its nature,* whatever regards its welfare will not bear a comparison even with the most valuable and excellent of our temporal concerns. The great body of mankind, however, are all fully occupied about the latter, and strangely inattentive to the former. We are cautious in every thing but where we ought to be most of all so. Hence we become
an

*It is some satisfaction to the mind, amidst the opposition of materialists of every description, that the first Philosophers, Orators, Poets, and Divines in the world, have ever held the doctrine of the soul's immortality. Among the Greeks we find Homer, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Plutarch, and others: among the Romans Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Pliny, and many more: among Christian divines we have an innumerable multitude. I might instance in Barrow, Wilkins, Howe, Butler, Clarke, and vast numbers beside. If it be objected that these were all interested witnesses, it being their trade to inculcate received notions: it may be replied, that the first of Poets and Philosophers, who had no secular ends to answer, have constantly maintained the same opinions. Among the former we find Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, West, Littleton, and Addison: among the latter Newton, Locke, Boyle, to whom we may add the two Bacons; men whose names in the philosophical world may justly be called Legion!

an easy prey to every designing seducer. If such persons fall into the hands of an artful deist,¹ a sagacious sceptic,² a subtle Socinian,³ or any other

R 2

specious

¹The deist rejects the authority of holy scripture entirely; the sceptic doubts of its veracity; and Dr. Priestley, who is partly a deist, partly a sceptic, and partly a Socinian, cashiers some parts of it wholly, doubts of others, and embraces others: so that, strictly speaking, he can no more be reasoned with, upon scriptural principles, than either of the former. And yet the Doctor is persuaded the time is near at hand "when the whole Christian world will embrace their opinion (Drs. Priestley and Price) when all those who now think differently from them, shall come to think just as they do, and wonder they should ever have thought otherwise." *Defences of Unitarianism, 1787.*

This is pretty confident, I think! Equally so is a late advocate for Polytheism, of the establishment of *his* religion in the world. "The revolution," says he, "is certain, however remote;" but "this must be the business of a *more enlightened* and philosophical age." Editor of *Proclus*.—See the Dissenter's Looking Glass, p. 91.

Whether Dr. Priestley's *unitarianism* or this gentleman's *polytheism* shall prevail, or whether they shall both find themselves mistaken in their sanguine expectations, must be left to time to discover. This, however, is most certain, that the bible, and the truths it contains, shall finally triumph over all opposition; and every whim of enthusiasts, infidels, and philosophers, be forever confounded. They have all much to say for themselves. So had Jannes and Jambres against Moses: so had the Scribes and Pharisees against Christ: but they reasoned all awry. So does Hammon, Voltaire, Dr. Priestley, and our other opposers of the truth, of every description. Their reasoning is specious and bearing the semblance of worth, but false and hollow. A fine instance of this sound and sophistical reasoning we have in Milton's *Paradise Regained*. Satan and Christ advance whatever can be said in favour of their respective pretensions.

²That is a just and important observation which is made by the profound Pascal:—"Should a man," says he, "happen to err in supposing the Christian religion to be true, he could be no loser by the mistake. But how irrecoverable is *his* loss, how inexpressible *his* danger, who should err in supposing it to be false."

Thoughts on Religion, p. 287.

³Dr. White, in his admirable sermons at the Bampton Lecture, speaking of Socinianism, says, "There is no period of the Christian

precious pretender to liberality and truth,* they must either become converts to their opinions, or have their minds harrassed with doubts and painful apprehensions, till they are settled upon some stable foundation. Indeed, it is of little consequence what we are, what we believe, or to what party we belong, unless we are thoroughly in earnest about salvation. Till this is the case, we are sure to perish upon any principles whatever; be we in other respects, ever so sensible, wise, learned, or moral.

But

“ church in which the divinity of Christ was not admitted as a primary article.”

Again :—“ Examine Socinianism by any rule of history that has been adopted for the trial of any fact, or the determination that has been passed on any opinion, and we can scarcely avoid seeing its utter inconsistency with the universal creed of the Christian church from the earliest period of its existence to the present time.”

Again :—“ Socinianism makes every thing doubtful. And no wonder—while it makes so little of the most express declarations of scripture, we need not be surprised that it should pay so little respect to the plainest evidence of history.”

Again :—“ The gradation from Socinianism to deism is very slight.”

And again :—“ Socinianism cuts to the very root of all that is distinguishing in the gospel.” See more to the same purpose in the Notes to these very able discourses, p. 60—68.

*The greatest deceivers are usually the greatest pretenders to liberality, candour, disinterestedness, truth, and whatever else is plausible, and calculated to captivate the minds of men, whose passions are strong and judgment weak. The multitude have been the dupes of such characters in every age and country. See Mat. 7. 15.—23.

“ A man must be serious in order to be wise.” Chinese Fragment, p. 153.

This Fragment, as it is called, contains an Enquiry into the present state of religion in England. Who the author is I know not: he appears to be a serious and sensible man. The account, however, which he gives of the state of things, in every religious point

But if the salvation of the soul once becomes our main concern, and the chief business we have in life; if the Bible^s is considered as the only sure and *infallible* rule of judging, and is made familiar to the mind: if the great doctrines of redemption are established

of view, is very dark and alarming. I could wish all our great men would consider well what he advances in the conclusion of that work. If Britons had cause to tremble six years ago, when that book was published; much more have we cause to be afraid of God's judgments now, when our iniquities are increased, and increasing in a rapid degree, and a spirit of dissatisfaction is gone abroad among the lower orders of the people. There must be a great shaking of the nations, and various distressing convulsions, it is to be feared, before the kingdom of Christ can be properly established in the world. Let the great Ones of the earth be apprised of their danger before it is too late, and make God their refuge. The signs of the times are alarming. When or where the storm will fall, divine providence alone must direct. This, however, we know for certain, that in the worst of times, it shall be well with them that fear the Lord. See Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times, the conclusion—Hartley's Observations on Man, vol. 2d. the conclusion—and the Preface to the 2d. vol. of the Speeches of M. De Mirabeau, by James White, Esqr.

*If in the course of these strictures I have been betrayed into expressions too hasty and severe, it has been where Dr. Priestley attacks the truth of holy scripture, with the person and undertaking of the Son of God. I have reviewed again and again those particular passages, since they were printed; and I find some of them severe enough, it is confessed; but yet such only as the circumstances seem to justify. God forbid I should ever hesitate for one moment between the favour of Dr. Priestley and the approbation of my blessed Saviour! I well know the Doctor can retaliate with abundant interest—witness his very indecent treatment of Bishop Horsley—but I am probably a mark too mean for him to take any notice of; and may therefore have some chance to escape from my mere obscurity. At all events, if I have really done him injustice (in the opinion of impartial men) I beg pardon both of God and him. Justice is due to every man, more especially to a person of Dr. Priestley's respectability. *Fiat justitia: ruat cælum!*

established upon the authority of clear passages drawn from thence ; and confirmed by the unanimous testimony of the Greek and Latin fathers, for the three or four first centuries, in regular succession ; we may, by the grace of God, defy all the seducers that ever lived to subvert our faith and hope in the grand peculiarities of the evangelical system.⁷ These are principles which have been thoroughly

⁷I would always be understood to make a distinction between the evangelical system, as contained in the New Testament, and all human forms, creeds, and compendiums of doctrine whatever. Not that I have any objection to them myself, provided they are consonant to the great standard of all truth, the Bible, soberly understood. But, I must confess, it appears to me, that there is much need of a reform in the ecclesiastical establishment of this country in several respects. We have various little blemishes which ought to be removed. Our Reformers were several of them great and good men, and acquitted themselves excellently. But it is long since they lived. They were just emerging from Popery. Men's views are now, in several respects, more enlarged. Our language too has undergone some changes. Criticism has been much attended to, and the holy scriptures have been more accurately studied. I should suppose, therefore, that a *revision* of our public forms, and the present translation of the bible, might have the happiest effect in removing the objections of candid, enlightened churchmen, making them more steady adherents to the religious establishment of their country, and bringing over abundance of the pious and moderate men from among our dissenting brethren. This would be strengthening the hands of government, and rendering our church, more than ever, the joy and praise of the whole earth.

For, whatever compliments we may pass upon ourselves, and however we may make our boast, that ours is the purest and best constituted national church in Christendom, which I have no difficulty in granting ; yet blemishes we surely have ; and such blemishes, as, to my certain knowledge, hurt and grieve the minds of many of the most sensible and enlightened, both of our clergy and laity. These blemishes, therefore, ought to be removed from our public forms ; yea, and, I should suppose, must be removed, if we mean to have the present establishment handed down to future ages. And, it

thoroughly tried, and the gates of hell shall never finally prevail against them. It is to such Christians as wish to make their last great stake both safe and sure, and to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing in whom they have believed, and why they embrace the orthodox scheme of redemption rather than any other, these Strictures are offered in the fear of God.

May that Great Being, the Father of lights, and God of all consolation, with whom is no variable-ness neither shadow of turning; who, according to his own will, teacheth man knowledge, and from whom alone proceedeth every good and perfect gift; guide all our minds into the truth as it is in Jesus, and bring us safe at last into his heavenly kingdom!

where

seems to me, that the present time is more favourable to such an *internal* reformation as I have hinted at, than any other that is likely to succeed it: because there seems to be learning, piety, good sense, orthodoxy, and moderation, sufficient in our present ecclesiastical governours for the conducting of such a work. They would only *revise*, I think, and not *change*, or *materially* alter our present forms. His Majesty also, and our civil governours, would easily be brought to concur, I doubt not, in such a salutary measure. The King who sanctioned, the men who executed, and the ministers of state who concurred in such a *revisional* would immortalize their names, and be denominated the friends of rational religion, and the benefactors of mankind. They would relieve many a tender and injured conscience, render the religion of our blessed Saviour more amiable, and worthy of acceptance, and incline the more candid deists themselves to embrace the Christian redemption, as well as bring over the moderate dissenters to worship God according to the religion of their country. This must be allowed, I think, by every candid churchman, a consummation devoutly to be wished!

where we shall no longer look through a glass darkly, but face to face; love as we are loved, see as we are seen, know as we are known, and spend an eternity together in the rapturous contemplation of that mysterious Deity, who chose us in Christ Jesus before the world began; justifies us freely by his grace; sanctifies us wholly by his Spirit; and washes us from our sins in the blood of his own Son; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



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